

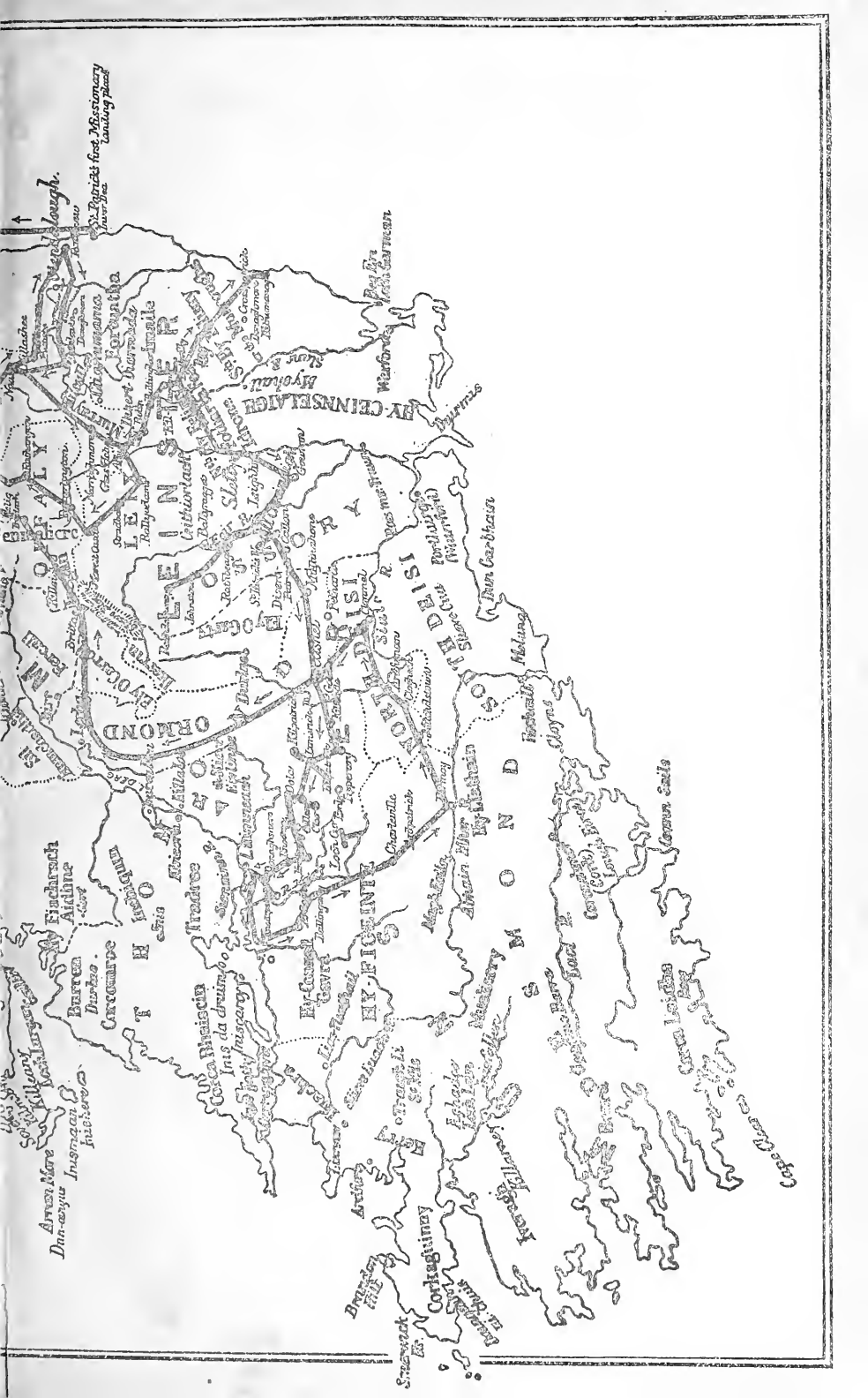
ST. PATRICK  
THE TRAVELLING MAN

WINIFRED M. LETTS

MAP  
SHOWING  
ST. PATRICK'S  
MISSIONARY JOURNEYS  
THROUGH IRELAND.

WELLESLEY COLLEGE LIBRARY  
BEQUEST OF





St. Francis's Bay

St. Francis's Bay

St. Francis's Bay

St. Francis's Bay

St. Francis's Bay

St. Francis's Bay

St. Francis's Bay

St. Francis's Bay

St. Francis's Bay

St. Francis's Bay



SAINT PATRICK  
THE TRAVELLING MAN



Digitized by the Internet Archive  
in 2010 with funding from  
Boston Library Consortium Member Libraries





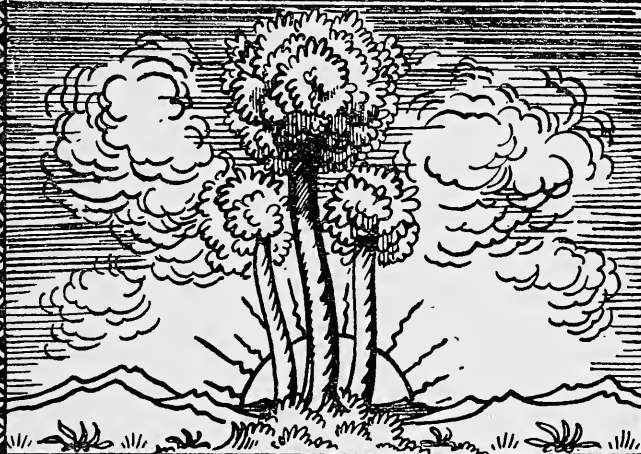
# SAINT PATRICK

## THE TRAVELLING MAN

*The Story of his Life and Wanderings*



By  
**WINIFRED M. LETTS**  
*Author of 'Songs from Leinster,' 'Hallowe'en.'*



**IVOR NICHOLSON & WATSON LTD.**

44 ESSEX STREET, STRAND, W.C.2

1932

August 2, 1857, Sunday, McDermott's

1857  
1858  
1859

To  
KATHLEEN VERSCHOYLE  
WHO LOVES IRELAND



# CONTENTS

CHAP.	PAGE
INTRODUCTION . . . . .	9
I. PATRICK IN BRITAIN . . . . .	19
Patrick's home life in Britain.—Account of Roman rule, the raids of the Barbarians.—Patrick's parents.—Niall of the Nine Hostages, his fame.—Capture of Patrick and his sister.—They sail for Ireland.	
II. PATRICK ON MOUNT SLEMISH . . . . .	28
His life as a herd on the mountain.—His prayers and fasting, his visions and voices.—Account of the King Milcho, the royal dūn, ways of life in Ireland.—Patrick's escape and wanderings, his journey to Gaul.	
III. PATRICK ON THE CONTINENT . . . . .	43
His long preparation for his work.—His years in the Isle of Lérins, the Camargue, at Auxerre.—Returns to Britain at some period.—His vision and call to Ireland.—Many delays.—The Palladian Mission to Ireland.—Patrick gets his marching orders.—He is made a Bishop.	
IV. PATRICK RETURNS TO IRELAND . . . . .	50
Start and equipment.—His difficulty in landing.—Adventures by the way.—He reaches Strangford.—A welcome from the King Dichu.—Patrick is given the Barn Saul.—He goes back to Slemish and sees Milcho's self-immolation.	
V. PATRICK COMES TO TARA . . . . .	58
Account of the Druids.—Description of the glory of Tara.—Cormac Mac Art and his state, his buildings.—Patrick comes from the north, he comes to Slane for Easter, lights the Paschal fire.—King Laoghaire drives to meet him.—Contests between the Druids and saint.—Patrick escapes, he sings The Deer's Cry, or Breastplate.—He appears in the great hall at Tara.	
VI. PATRICK DESTROYS CROM CRUACH . . . . .	75
He sets out on a missionary journey.—Goes to the Tailteann Fair.—He goes to Cavan to destroy the idol Crom Cruach.	

# CONTENTS

CHAP.	PAGE
VII. PATRICK CROSSES THE SHANNON . . . . .	80
He turns westward.—Converts two princesses; they die.—He goes on to Rath Cruachan, travels through Roscommon and Mayo.—He loves Aghagower, and makes a poem for it.	
VIII. PATRICK ON THE REEK . . . . .	86
Patrick spends Lent on Cruachan Aigle.—He contends in prayer for the salvation of Ireland.	
IX. PATRICK IN THE WEST . . . . .	92
He visits his new churches, and returns to Tara where he helps a prince to his rights.	
X. PATRICK IN DONEGAL . . . . .	97
A note on his looks and dress and character.—He goes to Donegal and then on to Antrim.—He revisits Slemish.—An account of the saint in Clogher with the story of MacCartan, the strong man.	
XI. PATRICK IN NORTH LEINSTER . . . . .	102
He goes to Naas and through the Glens of Wicklow, then into Wexford.—He meets the chief Bard and his nephew who is ordained.	
XII. PATRICK AT CASHEL OF THE KINGS . . . . .	107
He travels through Ossory and reaches Cashel, where he baptizes King Aengus.—He leaves Munster with regret.	
XIII. PATRICK IN ARMAGH . . . . .	113
He goes northward, wishes to settle at Dromore but the angel sends him on to Armagh.—Armagh becomes the Primatial See.—Story of Emain Macha.—Patrick and Daire contend, but a site for the Community is given.—Patrick's daily life, his system of rule and education.—The Epistle to Coroticus.	
XIV. PATRICK IN SAUL . . . . .	120
He goes to his beloved Saul.—Wishes to return to Armagh but the angel forbids it.—Death comes to him.—Stories of his death and burial.	
XV. PATRICK'S INFLUENCE . . . . .	123
He stands for a new order.—Brings Ireland into relation with Europe.—Gives power to the written word.—Prepares the way for the spread of monasticism.—Leaves the influence of his character to this day.—His travels shown by place-names.	
A NOTE ON THE LIVES OF ST. PATRICK . . . . .	126

## INTRODUCTION

ABOVE the Wells of Struell in the County Down there is a rocky seat called St. Patrick's Chair. From there you look across a valley to the great mass of the Mourne Mountains, which rise to their highest peak in Slieve Donard. It is a beauty which imposes silence. There, perhaps, you may realize the call that came to Patrick to come back to this land of his captivity. In A.D. 432 he came as a willing captive, the slave of a country whose national saint he was to be.

Surely more than half the men of Ireland are called Patrick to-day because a man called Patrick came to Ireland in that year with a message for the country, and for all its people, kings and druids, poets, warriors, children.

All Ireland is St. Patrick's country. You begin to grasp his untiring resolution when you look at the map of his journeys which is given in Archbishop Healy's Life of the saint. He was the Travelling Man of God; never might he rest for long, even while his human, so natural love of places gripped him now and then, so that he would willingly have stayed in Saul, or in Assaroe, in Armagh, or in Louth. Always the Hound of Heaven was behind him and he must travel with his message, he must be obedient to the Vision. But here in this County Down which knew the early days of his mission and the last days, one surely comes near to the saint of Ireland who was so human in spite of his biographers.

Almost wherever you go you will find him in place-

## SAINT PATRICK THE TRAVELLING MAN

name or in legend. And if the mark of his hand or his foot or his face is not really there, where the credulous see it, the greater truth is there, that his character has left an impress on the country to this day.

Men feared him or loved him at first sight. No one, I take it, was ever indifferent to Patrick. He kindled you to hostility or to a sudden surprising devotion. He was hasty tempered, so much so that his company knew his angry speeches and tried to avert them or to banter him about them. Duty and courage lashed him across and around Ireland. On he went, daring king and druid, facing forests and fording rivers, going round swamps, climbing mountains, always the determined leader, the pioneer of Christ.

But, while he felt his exile from that Roman-ruled Britain he had left, still he came to love Ireland, soul and body. That one cannot doubt. Follow him about the country and see it with his eyes. By the Slaney, whose name was lost until lately, for it was called the Fiddler's Burn, you stand at the place where he landed on that great mission of his in A.D. 432. Now one sees only the wild swans on Strangford Lough, and an embanked mouth of a tiny river which gives joy to the ducks. But this was where the strong current of the lough brought the boat when Patrick came back to Ireland. Here is a bridle-path between thick hedges, it is the very road that Patrick and his company followed. Go a mile or so to the Wells of Struell, and you see the place where he passed a night, wrestling in spirit to win the strength for his warfare. Struell is a place of healing for mind and body, and above it is that hill-climbing path which leads you to the vision of the Mourne Mountains, seen so often by Patrick and his companions. Much of the country may have changed. The forests have gone, the land is



## INTRODUCTION

reclaimed from the sea, but that view of Slieve Donard and his supporting mountains is unchanged.

Go, too, to Saul, that windy hill among the wind-blown, grassy hills of Down. It is so haunted by old memories that one half expects the stones to take up the parable and tell of the man who came here in 432 and won the love of Dichu, the good chief. Here at Saul the barn was given, and received gratefully, and St. Patrick had his first church, which was the beacon whose light should spring from hill to hill to the farthest west. And here to Saul came an old and weary man, with a great work done. This little place was better for an old man than was the great church settlement of Armagh with its business and distraction. Near Saul you may see Raholp, and there was Tassach, his companion, a craftsman in metal work. Tassach came to his old master with the Last Sacrament and gave him kindly companionship to the end. You may see Raholp to this day, an old church on the site of Tassach's church. So, going from place to place, you can follow St. Patrick and see what he saw and loved.

Everywhere along the route of his journeys are holy wells or a stone supposed to be impressed by his foot or hand, and so he lives on in folk-lore as only a man of strong character will do.

Down on the Wexford shore in a little bay, Polshone, there is a story of him to the effect that he tried to land here after having been repulsed on the Wicklow coast. That is unlikely, but Polshone must be the place, two miles north of Cahore, where Patrick and Dubthach met; two old men full of talk and plans which involved the young Fiacc whom the saint wanted for a bishop. Dubthach was Chief Bard of Ireland, a king poet, and Fiacc, his nephew, would have succeeded him as Chief Bard. But returning suddenly and joining them on this Wexford shore he fell in with their schemes and gave

## SAINT PATRICK THE TRAVELLING MAN

himself and his life generously. This was the Fiacc who became Bishop of Sletty and wrote the metrical Life of St. Patrick.

But without going farther than Dublin one can see a relic of St. Patrick, one that he must have often handled and loved, as the old do love a familiar object that is symbol of their work and honour in life. This is the bell called "The Bell of the Will" which is in the National Museum in Dublin, with its magnificent shrine made for it later. It is supposed that this Bell of the Will was left by testament to the Church of Armagh—hence the name. It is said too that St. Columba found it on Patrick's breast when his coffin was opened and that Columba made this poem :

"My love to thee, O smooth, melodious Bell,  
Which was on the Tailcenn's breast;  
Which was permitted me by the guileless Christ—  
The raising and delivering of it.

I command for the safe keeping of my Bell  
Eight who shall be noble, illustrious,  
A priest and a deacon among them,  
That my Bell may not deteriorate."

The maker of the bell was one of the saint's three smiths who wrought in ironwork, MacCecht by name. This bell was the symbol of power. It called the congregation to worship. It was dear to the old man and handled often by wrinkled hands. Bells had a peculiar significance in these days among Christians and their converts. The shrine of the bell was made between 1090 and 1105 at the order of the High King. The bell was sometimes used in later days as a battle standard, sometimes in the ratification of solemn oaths.

Near the bell in the Museum is another treasure, the copy of the Gospels with its shrine, given by St. Patrick to his friend and champion MacCartan of Clogher.

## INTRODUCTION

Within a later book cover is the little yew wood box containing the very old copy of the Gospels.

The sight of these things, handled and treasured by the man who came back to Ireland in A.D. 432, can make him real to us in 1932 if we will have it so.

People may say—"He is almost a myth—who knows anything about him? His birthplace, his grave, are uncertain. Old writers have woven a tissue of doubtful miracles for his fame, and who can say what the real man was?" But a man lives on in his own words, and in nothing material is he so immortal as in his letters.

To know Patrick you must read his *Confession*, and his flaming, righteously angry letter to Coroticus. In the *Confession* we get the real man beyond any doubt, as we find St. Paul in his own Epistles.

You may be disappointed to find so few of the facts of his life in the *Confession*, but you find a man's spirit, hurt with the wounds given to him by distrust and harsh criticism from his friends. You find a man very humble about his failures, about his lack of scholarship, yet proud, with head held high, in his vocation and in his conscious honesty of purpose. You find, too, what we might forget in the man of endless business and determined fighting, the man of prayer.

There was the vision and the call, given in his own words: "We beseech thee, holy youth, to come and walk once more amongst us."

"And on another night, whether within or beside me I know not, God knoweth, in the clearest words, which I heard but could not understand until the end of the prayer, He spoke out thus: 'He who laid down His life for thee, He it is who speaketh within thee.' And so I awoke full of joy. And once more I saw Him praying in me and He was as it were within my body; and I heard Him over me, that is over the interior man; and there strongly He prayed with groanings. And

## SAINT PATRICK THE TRAVELLING MAN

meanwhile I was astonished and marvelled and considered who it was who prayed within me; but at the end of the prayer He spoke out to the effect that He was the Spirit; and so I awoke and remembered the Apostle saying: 'The Spirit helpeth the infirmities of our prayer. For we know not what we should pray for as we ought, but the Spirit Himself asketh for us with unspeakable groanings which cannot be uttered in words.' "

This is the spirit of the man who spent forty days and nights on Croagh Patrick, striving for the salvation of his chosen country. The old legends of his bargain with the Almighty is like a mist on the mountain. This man in whom the Spirit prayed was a greater than his chroniclers could estimate.

In the light of the *Confession* we must judge the stories of cursings and retributions which the old writers have hoarded up. Probably they hold some truth. Here was a man who terrified his enemies, a man quick of temper, a man made irritable by many affairs, a man of gruff, hasty exclamations: "By God's doom," or "Gratzacham" for his thanks.

Pleasantly human are the glimpses of his relations with his own friends and kin. For example—his nephew Sechnall, or Secundinus, found a relief in criticizing Uncle Patrick to the rest of the family—a common habit with nephews. "Patrick is a good man; were it not for one thing, he is a most excellent man." How he longed to be asked "What thing?" The busy-bodies made haste to tell the uncle that the nephew had criticized him. Criticism always hurt Patrick. It was so often unfair. One imagines the meeting, and "What is this, Sechnall, that I hear you say I lack?" Then the nephew, rather hot and nervous, tries to explain it. "I meant, O my father, that you did not preach charity, that is the giving of alms and offerings."

## INTRODUCTION

Then Patrick, strong in the devotion of his converts, smiling, a little triumphant, could answer: "But, my little son, it is for charity's sake that I do not preach charity. For if I preached it I should not leave a yoke of horses for any of the saints present or future that are to come after me. Everything would be given to me."

So Sechnall, rather anxious for his uncle's good opinion, must go away and compose a laudatory poem in the rather tedious manner of the day, which only anticipated the biographies of living people in our own time. The poem having been written, Sechnall contrived to meet his uncle casually near Forkhill on the slopes of Slieve Gullion. Patrick was resting, surely looking at the beauty of the scene, when Sechnall appeared, a little self-conscious in manner.

Each blessed the other, as Irish people would do to this day.

"I wish you would listen," said Sechnall, "to this eulogy which I have made for a certain man of God."

"Welcome to me," said Patrick, "is the praise of God's homestead." So Sechnall in the manner of the bards gave out his poem, and Uncle Patrick with due modesty returned thanks and praise for the effort.

Another passage which seems to unite the ages occurs in the Rule of St. Patrick, which may or may not be his own work.

"It is children up to boys of seven years who are only chastised for their first crime with scourge or belt or palm of the hand, to wit, three blows on them with palm of hand, or belt or scourge."

So "the bold child" in old Ireland had the same treatment as he gets to-day.

Again there is the homely little incident of the saint's nose bleeding; and his dealing with a sick woman when his advice to her and to others was to take onions.

## SAINT PATRICK THE TRAVELLING MAN

It will be our happiness if we can follow Patrick to the west, to the mountain of his long fast, Croagh Patrick, to Clare Island, or to Downpatrick Head. Little he thought that the Gospel would go to men beyond that ocean which to him was the limit of the world. "So we are witnesses that the Gospel has been preached to the places beyond which no one dwells."

Ireland was to him a land of dangers, "ambushes, slavery, plots," yet one never doubts that he loved the country. He spoke its speech. He was friend of kings and poets, of children and young men. All of them found in him something compelling, lovable, inspiring. He was a man overflowing with life. That is why his memory is green to-day, and why there is such great pleasure in following his journeys and conjuring the scenes where he played a part.

It must seem an impertinence that one who has no claim to scholarship or to any new information should set out to write a life of a man who is, as it were, the property of great scholars, learned theologians, and readers of old Irish. But in writing this short account of St. Patrick's travels, taken from the scholars' books, I have thought of those who, like myself, have no scholarship; people who want, however, to know something of a man who impressed himself so strongly on a country's life, and to follow him, perhaps, on his travels. I have thought of those who live in Ireland, and of visitors who come in summer days to Ireland, with time to travel and a wish to know the stories that belong to the places they visit. Whenever "Patrick" occurs in a name, there this Travelling Man of God has been, on foot or by chariot, full of his affairs and his mission. To-day we go to the same places by train, by motor or by motor 'bus, where Patrick went on foot or by chariot with that company we read of—his bishop and priest, his judge and champion, his bell-

## INTRODUCTION

ringer, his cook and table attendants, his woodman and cowherd, his three smiths, three artificers, his three workers of embroidery. With any sense of historical imagination we can evoke the busy company on their journeys.

St. Patrick came as a captive to Ireland when he came first. But in A.D. 432 he returned of his free will to live and to die there, loving the country and its people, desiring to settle in certain places but driven on and on by his message, until, as an old man, he stayed in Armagh, and later still went for the close of a busy life to the quiet of green little Saul, where he died, having so long served and loved this country of his adoption.





# ST PATRICK THE TRAVELLING MAN

## CHAPTER I

### PATRICK IN BRITAIN

YOUTH ended for Patrick, son of Calpurnius, with the last day of his freedom. Many times as a slave herd-boy on Mount Slemish he must have looked back to that last happy careless day, when he was the young master on his father's estate in Britain. He wished then that he had counted each moment a blessing, realized the joy of being his own man, the beloved son of his parents; wished that he had taken more time to thank God for the delights of a free-born life, with its comforts of food and fire and shelter and kind words.

But the day passed as such days do, unheeded in its security; with no shadow of the coming event that was to make him a slave and an apostle in the land of his captivity. It was in all likelihood just such a day as any young citizen passed in Roman Britain in the first days of the fifth century. He was born probably in A.D. 389, and was now a boy of fifteen.

There have been many disputes among scholars about the place of his birth. Scotland is frequently named, with a number of good reasons, and some others have suggested Brittany, but historians of such repute as Dr. Bury and Professor Eoin MacNeill suggest a place on the north of the lower Severn, probably in the County of Glamorgan.

So we may picture the young Patrick within easy

## SAINT PATRICK THE TRAVELLING MAN

reach of the estuary of the Severn, loving the boats which went up and down, the sea-birds, the ebb and flow of the tide. He, with his sisters and brothers, would roam the shore, looking for shells and seaweed; watching the wading birds at low tide, the curlew and dunlins and sand-pipers. Childhood never becomes dull history, it is always of to-day, knit to the present by a hundred blessed ties.

Patrick, be sure, sailed his boats with the other boys of Bonnaventa; made slings and bows and arrows, and shot at marks, or played at soldiers with them. Of all boys young Roman citizens would be likely to play at soldiers, to make for themselves shields and swords and spears, and copy as best they could the fine helmets of the legionaries. What could be more impressive to any boy than a Roman soldier in his full equipment? Patrick must have had friends among the soldiers, kindly men who liked this brave, frank-faced boy, and were ready to tell him about the wars in Gaul, or of great days in their mistress city Rome.

In later days, when he had wandered so far in the West, he could still recall with the old thrill of pride that he was a Roman citizen, son of Calpurnius, a land-owner and decurion, a deacon and man of note, with authority, temporal and spiritual.

There was the joy of his father's farm for Patrick in those days of his freedom. A farm has the same joys for children of all time. Little did he think as he looked at the sheep and pigs how soon he would be herding them for a stranger. But now he was the young master on his father's land, free to look for birds' nests, to climb the trees, to roam the fields unshadowed by a ruthless Destiny, that was in disguise the mercy of God. He who looked at the harvests in these British fields was called to reap the fields of an alien race, and to be their apostle.

## PATRICK IN BRITAIN

The old writers ascribe to the boy Patrick miraculous powers, make him a wonder among his kinsfolk, a child who could produce water, honey, fire, at any convenient moment. More value belongs surely to the miracle of the growth of character, proceeding quietly all this time, fitting the boy for his great work. According to himself, Patrick was a careless boy in those days, heedless of Christianity because it was his birthright. He grew up in a Christian atmosphere, and thought, as he confesses, little about it. His grandfather was Potitus, a priest, and his father was a deacon. His uncle, according to an old tradition, was the great Saint Martin of Tours.

But what of that to a boy? His Uncle Martin was no doubt to Patrick one of those unseen, rather legendary relations who adorn most families. His mother, Conchessa, may have talked of this brother of hers at meal times: "Your uncle always said," or "I'll tell you a story about your uncle. Oh, if you could only grow up a man like him. Indeed, you do look like him at times. You must try and be worthy of him." Such sayings probably fell on unheeding ears, and yet were recalled later with the wish that he had listened better.

There must have been table-talk worth hearing in the house of a Roman decurion in those days in Britain. A quick-witted boy like Patrick would listen more often than not. There were many days when Calpurnius was overshadowed by care, and Conchessa graver than was her custom. Legend has it that Calpurnius brought his beautiful wife from Gaul. In one story she was his slave, by whom he, the captor, was enslaved. Impressed by her loveliness of face and nature he married her, and theirs was a Christian home where love and honour and gentle ways and speech were the custom.

However, the very happiness of the home was the more anxiety to Calpurnius in those insecure days of

## SAINT PATRICK THE TRAVELLING MAN

the Empire. All he loved best depended on the strength of Rome to guard them. He had seen so much history in the making, as he would tell his boys on those days when he had time for talk. They did not come very often, for Calpurnius was a busy man. It might seem to be an honour to be a decurion in his town, a member of the Municipal Council; but there were very few who sought the honour in those days. Every landowner who did not belong to the Senatorial class was bound to be a decurion if he possessed sixteen acres or upwards, and on these landowners fell the weight of taxation. They had to deliver to the Imperial revenue officers the amount of taxation levied on the community; it fell on them both to collect the taxes and to assess them. And what taxes there were!—The poll tax, the funeral tax, the legacy tax, the auction tax, the tax on the sale of slaves, the tributes on corn, hay and cattle, and all the other extortions laid on a struggling people. This was the bad side of living under Roman rule. But then there was the good protection of the Roman army, even if the British had to supply the armies on the Rhine with corn for their bread.

Yes, Calpurnius would say, one could not be too thankful for the protection of Rome, living as they did in Britain, surrounded by barbarians. Conchessa agreed to that, and the children pricked their ears, half in terror, half in delight, to listen to the awful doings of those Gaels and Scots who might, one never knows, be down on them any day.

Britain had been invaded time after time, and even Roman power had been ominously threatened. The northern frontier was menaced by the Picts of Caledonia; the west was a prey to those seafaring robbers the Gaels and Scots from Ireland; while the south was threatened by the Saxons. Calpurnius, the Christian deacon, might tell his children that such is the world's

## PATRICK IN BRITAIN

way, and "Thy Kingdom come" the best prayer for all times and peoples.

But Patrick, so he has told us, was careless of these things, yet profoundly aware of them. He knew right from wrong in his self-condemnation. His conscience was to be troubled for years by a sin of this period, when he was barely fifteen, something done carelessly in an hour, but searing to his sense of right, a thing he could brood over and tell in confidence to his greatest friend many years later. What it was we do not know, though the friend cruelly used it against Patrick in later days when his right to be a bishop was considered. Strange it seems that any friend could be so base. But in the story one finds the sensitive conscience of the boy at this time and his awareness of evil.

Patrick may have heard more stories of the barbarians from his grandfather Potitus, who knew well all that Britain had suffered in two terrible years when she was attacked on all sides by Picts and Scots and Saxons. Whenever a Roman legion was recalled to the Continent for service then these raids would follow.

Theodosius, the great Emperor's father, was the succour of Britain. He came in haste and pursued the raiders back to their own quarters. Then things were quiet for a time. Roman Britain was thoroughly defended with its great wall on the north, with its walled cities, its excellent roads and its fine army. But trouble came again. The tyrant Maximus assumed the purple at York, this in A.D. 383, by the wish of the army. But he could not hold his title, backed only by Britain, so he crossed over to Gaul with forces to support himself, leaving the Britons to defend themselves with a reduced army. Again the raiders came down and peace did not return till the fall of Maximus in 388, when the son of the Emperor Theodosius sent his most trusted general, Stilicho, to defend Roman Britain. The

## SAINT PATRICK THE TRAVELLING MAN

enemy took to heels and boats and went off before Stilicho reached them, and he had little to do but fortify and defend.

These were the grievous doings of the days before Patrick's birth. It is possible that Calpurnius had fought in the wars in Gaul.

So the children of Calpurnius had this breathing space in troubled history for their upgrowing. A blessed thing it is for the young to have peaceful nights and careless, happy days. These, as a blessing to memory, belonged to Patrick and his sisters. A childhood in that lovely west of England, with its hills and waterways, its blue of far mountains and seas, its cloudy skies and soft rains, its roaring west winds, its bracken and heather, and treasures of each season would be riches for anyone.

Patrick looked forward to a long time of such happy days. Presently he would be grown up and able to assume all the rights of a Roman citizen, be something more than the boy Sucat, as his name was in British speech. He would be registered in the town as Patricius Magonus Sucatus, a fine-sounding, high-meaning name.

But while the children played at soldiers, or wandered about the farm or by the estuary, there were more cares for Calpurnius and Conchessa. The news from the Continent was bad news. One and another brought it, and the army talk was all of the disasters in Italy. At any moment the legion might be called up, exciting news for soldiers, but terrible for the Britons who were living in peace and security because of the Roman army.

Conchessa must have had broken sleep thinking of what the next day might bring. If things got worse in Italy Rome would need more and more soldiers—and then what fate for Britain? The raids of the Scots

## PATRICK IN BRITAIN

were only too fresh in their memories, and in the grandfather's tales. All very well for her children to play at these raids, for some of them to come yelling with tangled hair and sticks in their hands, to seize the others and drag them off as slaves; all very well as a game, but they little guessed the reality. Even the game made her shiver; and it was one to give the little ones nightmare. .

Calpurnius was troubled very often now. At the meetings in the town and in his talks with his friends, other decurions, or officers of the army, he heard only bad news, and fears for the future. Nothing went well after the death of the great Theodosius. The Barbarians were too strong and the power of Rome grew feebler. There was no need for newspapers. Bad news travels fast. Everyone was full of talk about the great Alaric the Goth. He had been very subtle, undermining the Empire, all the time that he was an Imperial General, a Master of soldiers. Alaric and his Goths were the incoming tide, there was no stopping the surge of them. They had laid Greece low, and now they had entered Italy. Honorius the Emperor was trembling on his throne.

Soon came the news that these Roman Britons feared. A Britannic legion was summoned to Italy. All the excitement of soldiers going off to war for the children, but dismay for the fathers of families, to men like Calpurnius who knew too much of war and of barbarous peoples.

There were other stories going around at this time. Another great king, a leader of men, was much in men's mouths, a sort of Bogey-man to the children of Roman citizens, as, much later, "Boney" was a terror to little Britons in the Napoleonic wars.

He would be good stuff for the story-tellers, and scaremongers, this King Niall of the Nine Hostages,

## SAINT PATRICK THE TRAVELLING MAN

High King of Ireland, winning his name from the hostages of tributary kings, who always attended him. This King Niall was someone who made people talk of him in Britain. He was a great general, a sailor too, fearing neither storms nor swords. He sailed far seas; his own people believed that he invaded Gaul and conquered all before him to the foot of the Alps. At long last he fell in a foreign land at the hands of an Irishman. He left many sons to rule in Ireland for he was the ancestor of the great O'Neill family of Tyrone, and it was said of his posterity that, besides multitudes of illustrious families, "nearly three hundred of his descendants, eminent for their learning and for the sanctity of their lives, have been enrolled in the catalogue of the saints."

Strange and ironic Destiny that was weaving a web round this pagan king and the boy who should convert his people to Christianity.

. . . . .

On the next day the terror fulfilled itself. It could not have thrown an immediate shadow, for it seems that Patrick and Lupita, his sister, were away from their parents at the country villa. Had his elders been afraid they would have had the family close to them. Perhaps they had grown used to fear and refused to listen to it. Certainly one must suppose they were too far to save their children or to be captured themselves.

Suddenly they came, these Irish raiders, sailing up the river in a great fleet of boats. One can picture the scene, a messenger rushing breathlessly with the news, shouting as he ran: "The Scots . . . they are coming. Quick . . . hide . . . run for your lives." Then there would follow the confusion of hopeless flight. The men would try to hide the women and children. One knows that Patrick, all courage and honour, tried to save his sister



## PATRICK IN BRITAIN

and the women-servants. But it could not protect them from this raid which was on a vast scale. He might take command, play the man, as he would, before the enemy; it was of no use. Nothing could be done against this shouting horde of warriors.

Here they come, sunburnt, wild-looking men, running to the attack, strange in dress, strange in speech, men of iron muscle. Their war-cries are terrible; they have shields and spears and battle-axes for the attack. Taken unaware, how can these farm people resist them? There are no Roman troops to come to the rescue now. A huge fleet of boats waits for the captives. Some seize the women and drag them away, others beat down the men. Someone caught Patrick and fettered him so that he struggled in vain; a gallant boy this, a fine slave for a chief this young British gentleman.

So they were captured; from all that countryside they were brought, if it be true that thousands were taken that day. Success was with the Irishmen. It was a sad procession that was urged and beaten down to the boats. The captors laughed and shouted. Where was Rome now they asked. The Britons were hustled and lifted on to the Irish ships. Patrick and his sister were separated. Did he, one wonders, know what had happened to her? Some say that she was brought to Dundalk Bay, while Patrick was taken farther north to the district called Dalaradia, where his boat came into the port which is now called Larne.

## CHAPTER II

### PATRICK ON MOUNT SLEMISH

THERE was a shout. Ireland was in sight. How many have found their destiny in that first glimpse of far-off hills across the western sea. "That is Ireland!"

Perhaps they said it to the boy Patrick, so quiet and brave, fettered as he was. He was a boy to attract his captors. He could not understand their speech but a sign was enough. This was the country of his captivity.

Over the sea he saw it with its folded blue hills. The Mountains of Mourne must have shown themselves on the horizon, the mountains about Carlingford and Dundalk. Here, for all he knew, his whole life would be spent in the drab misery of a slave. But, after all, a man can be greater than his captivity. His father had taught him that in the Christian Gospel. His grandfather and his father before him had believed that no man's spirit belongs to any king but God. During that terrible voyage over the sea, with all its misery of mind and body, he had been thinking of these things which so lately he had not heeded. Those first Christians had been taken prisoner as their Master had. They had been ~~tormented~~, tormented, shouted down by the law; but no one had conquered them. Christ the King . . . He was greater surely than this Niall of the Nine Hostages. His soldiers could not be defeated. Patrick was holding on to this faith, so suddenly realized, with all his might. He must not let it go. He must not shed a tear or let these people see that he was afraid. He had found something that they had not yet found. They might





## PATRICK ON MOUNT SLEMISH

have gods to propitiate. But he had a God who could uphold him through everything.

So those were the mountains of Ireland? Then—so be it, God would be in Ireland as surely as He was in the happy home village with its Sunday services, its ordered church life and sacraments, its gently accepted religion. Come what might, Patrick had found a talisman greater than any that these people knew. He could wait his destiny now.

His captors had judged rightly that this was a fit slave for a king; a fine boy, gently nurtured, with a courage and dignity worthy of his good breeding. Such a slave would have endurance.

When the boat came to port, probably in the place now called Larne, Patrick was in the kingdom of North Dalaradia, which stretched between Belfast Lough and the River Braid, and at this time beyond the Braid to the range of hills that extend north-west from Glenarm. Milcho was the king and to Milcho this slave should go.

Milcho was a shrewd man, hard and bigoted. He could see how this British boy would serve him best. He made Patrick his herd, to guard his sheep and swine on the slopes of Slemish Mountain and in the woods below. A herd, Milcho knew, must be brave enough to drive away wolves, careful enough to look out for good feeding, and to think of his flocks by night and by day, trustworthy enough to be on the watch for robbers, strong enough to endure the hardship of all weathers, the rain of Ireland, the damp cold of winter, the bitter east winds. This young Briton, with his Roman citizen airs, his quietness and his fearless eyes, was the very slave for Milcho.

So Patrick took up his duties, and hard enough they were. In summer it was not so hard, even pleasant when the sun shone, and he could sit beside his dogs on the mountainside and give himself up to those long

## SAINT PATRICK THE TRAVELLING MAN

thoughts of his. Dogs are kind company at all times. For him as for us there were the tokens of spring and summer—the first call of the cuckoo, the first harsh welcome cry of the corn-crake in the meadows, the first gleam of a swallow, the shrieking of swifts in the sunset hour of a June night, the drumming of snipe in their aerial games which he must have watched often and often over the bogs.

Outside the great forests of that time and the dangerous morasses and quagmires there were open plains and valleys and hills under cultivation and pasturage. The woods held dangers that we never know, wolves and wild boars, but the gentler parts of the island must have been as we know and love them to-day.

Patrick, alone so much of the day and night, rising before dawn, must have gathered a wealth of nature lore. He would know where the vixen had her den; the path of the wise badger, the nests of the birds. A bird that we cannot see now he knew in its glory, the osprey or eagle. The flight of the wild geese across the sky must have been a joy to him and the skein of swans on the wing. He knew that quiet fisherman, the heron, or “crane” as he is in Ireland. Perhaps he learnt a lesson from the bird’s patience as he stood there biding his time. For him, the slave, the countryside had all its treasures. Slemish in summer showed him its flowers, the little golden cinquefoil, white bedstraw, yellow trefoil, wind-blown flags of bog-cotton, heather, all the butterflies of the summer. He slept, no doubt, in a sheeling in the woods, the deer, the squirrels, the rabbits for neighbours; rising before dawn, he tells us, to pray, doing this in all weathers.

But when summer passed and the cold and rain of November found him, it was no easy life for a boy. Few cared how he lodged and whether he were cold or hungry. Kindness and comfort had been left behind in

## PATRICK ON MOUNT SLEMISH

Britain. Now he must be a man and look out for himself. In winter he drove his herds back to the king's "dún" for their safety and protection. And when they were safe he might, if he chose, seek warmth and cheer within the dún.

What was this dún like? The houses of the ancient Irish were often built in quadrilateral shape of split planks with a thatch overhead or of wickerwork with a cup-shaped roof, plastered with clay and whitewashed. Around the dún was a high rampart of earth with a thorn hedge or palisade on top to keep out wild animals and robbers. Probably there was a vegetable garden within this enclosure and here too the familiar Irish "haggard" for corn-stacks, with places for the cattle and sheep driven in for safety, and ground for outdoor games.

Patrick might miss the Roman elegance of his father's town house and country villa, with their cultured speech and ways, their link with the great Empire, but he would appreciate the different civilization which he found in Ireland. Here he was among people who loved beautiful things. He, poor slave boy, so barely clad, could only look from afar at rich clothing, collars of wrought gold, mantles of beautiful colour with gold clasps, gold brooches and pins. He could look on, perhaps, at feasting and revelling, hear harp-playing, and singing, and the stories and poems of the bards and shanachies (story-tellers). It was a brilliant life, this in the dún, after the chilly dark of a winter day on Slemish.

In Dr. Douglas Hyde's *Literary History of Ireland* there is a poem which gives an idea of a rich household in this old Ireland:—

" The colour of her house is like the colour of lime.  
 Within it are couches and green rushes,  
 Within it are silks and blue mantles,  
 Within it are red, gold and crystal cups.

## SAINT PATRICK THE TRAVELLING MAN

Of its many chambers the corner-stones  
Are all of silver and yellow gold,  
In faultless stripes its thatch is spread,  
Of wings of brown and of crimson red.

Two door-posts of green I see,  
Doors not devoid of beauty,  
Of carved silver, long has it been renowned  
In the lintel that is over the door.

Crede's chair is on your left hand,  
The pleasantest of the pleasant it is,  
All over, a blaze of Alpine gold  
At the foot of her beautiful couch.

A splendid couch in full array  
Stands directly above the chair;  
It was made by *Tuile* in the East  
Of yellow gold and precious stones.

There is another bed on your right hand  
Of gold and silver without defect,  
With curtains with soft pillows,  
With graceful rods of golden bronze.

An hundred feet spans Crede's house  
From one angle to the other,  
And twenty feet are fully measured  
In the breadth of its noble door.

Its portico is covered, too,  
With wings of birds, both yellow and blue,  
Its lawn in front and its well  
Of crystal and of Carmogel."

This poem gives us an idea of the richness and beauty of a chieftain's dún in Ireland. A king was expected to exercise hospitality, to have poets, bards, satirists, pipers, harpists, trumpeters, buffoons about his royal table. Cormac Mac Art said, "A prince should light his lamps on Samhain day (November 1) and welcome his guests with clapping of hands and comfortable seats,



## PATRICK ON MOUNT SLEMISH

and the cup-bearers should be active in distributing meat and drink." Of fish and game there was abundance, for hunting and fishing were favourite sports, and venison and salmon must have been plentiful on royal tables.

Chess was, we know, an accomplishment of all well-bred Irish men and women. But Patrick probably had no chance to play chess. He could only look on, as a slave might, if trusted by his master and well known to the people of the Court. It seems likely, though, that sometimes on winter evenings when the wind howled about the dún and there was snow on Slemish and the morasses were frozen, Patrick sat on the floor on the outer circle of the listeners and heard some shanachie relate the great heroic tales whose heroes were not so long dead. A boy of sixteen would be quick to learn the speech of his captors, and an intelligent boy, brought up under Roman rule, knew how to learn. At first he would understand, then he would speak a little, and, at last, for lack of his own tongue, he would even think in the new language. Probably Patrick learnt Irish in the best and most beautiful form from these story-tellers. What boy would not be thrilled by tales of the great hero Cuchulain? Christian as he was, Patrick could respond to the heroic courage and endurance of this pagan warrior. "Only," said Patrick to himself, "I know a greater hero, if they would but listen to my stories about Him. Some day . . . shall I ever dare to tell them that my Christ is even greater than their Cuchulain?"

Tradition says that he questioned later with his own conscience whether or no it were right to take so much interest in the tales of the Fianna. The old story has it that Ossian, Finn's son, who had lived in Tir-na-n-oge with the faery people for a hundred years, made his way back to earth, to find the Fianna all dead and himself an alien in this Christian world, where Finn and his com-

## SAINT PATRICK THE TRAVELLING MAN

pany were nearly forgotten. Caoilte (Kū-eel-te) also in the legend has survived to meet the saints. Ossian and he travel for a time with St. Patrick and tell him countless stories of their great days.

Ossian is described as living, a very old broken man, on clerical charity in Elphin; ill pleased with bare living and austerity, and mourning his companions and his great father, whose fame, he thinks, exceeds all that Patrick can claim for God or man. But this is to anticipate coming events. We return to Patrick, crouching on the outskirts of the hall.

He might hear the tragic story of Deirdre and the three sons of Usnach, and the long-drawn history of the Tain, the *Cattle Raid of Cooley*, or some tale of Conn of the Hundred Battles, his son Art the Lonely, his grandson Cormac Mac Art. The boy lived so much in a world of the spirit because his body was so often cold and hungry, that he had to use all means to forget it. Besides, he had found this new kingdom in which he was a freeman. He could go from the warm and cheerful dún to the windy world of mountain and bog and forest and be quite happy. He was learning every day to live more and more in the spirit. And this period on Slemish is of vital importance to his future. Every day the man was growing within the boy. Just as Moses prepared to be a leader of men by his long loneliness in the desert; as St. John the Baptist remained in the Wilderness until his mission was ready; as, centuries later, young Joan of Arc was in the fields of Domrémy before her call to arms, so in his time St. Patrick wandered on the mountain, questing for God, fighting in the perpetual struggle of good against evil, fighting in the spirit, apprehending each day the great forces that war against the armies of God.

Patrick was to be a lover of mountains all his life and to give his name to that great Reek which overlooks

## PATRICK ON MOUNT SLEMISH

the Atlantic, Croagh Patrick. Later, when we see his struggles at Tara and on Moy Slaght, the plain of adoration, against the strongest pagan forces, we realize what his six years in the lonely and mountainous places had made him.

Slemish, and his long period of hermit solitude at Lérins, had made him a man, unconquerable, with a might he had learnt in prayer, in talk with God, in constant wrestling against "spiritual wickedness in high places." He himself tells us:

"Now after I came to Ireland, daily I herded flocks and often during the day I prayed. Love of God and His fear increased more and more, and my faith grew, and my spirit was stirred up, so that in a single day I said as many as a hundred prayers and at night likewise, though I abode in the woods and in the mountain. Before the dawn I used to be aroused to prayer in snow and frost and rain, nor was there any tepidity in me, such as I now feel, because then the Spirit was fervent within me."

So keenly did the boy listen to the voice that spoke to his spirit that sometimes he thought he heard an audible message. And it seemed as if one of the angels, one called Victor, became especially his friend and counsellor. According to some this Victor was the Angel of Ireland, one of those Angelic Principalities or Powers of whom the New Testament speaks.

But, according to an old story, there were others in the world of men who loved the British slave boy and sought him out, whether with their kingly father's approval or not, we may guess. Milcho, we read in the *Tripartite Life of Saint Patrick*, had a son and two daughters, who were irresistibly drawn to their father's British slave. His kindliness, his gracious, gentle manners, his dignified patience drew the king's children

## SAINT PATRICK THE TRAVELLING MAN

to him. They loved to be with him, but they must do the seeking. They knew that he was hungry even if he never complained, so many times they brought him food from their own rich table. And because to receive graciously is often quite as generous as to give graciously, the king's slave took the gifts of the king's children and sat with them on the warm grass, maybe, while he kept an eye on his flocks. Then they, as children do, asked him a hundred and one questions, about his old home, his parents, his life. How did he bear his lot so cheerfully? What was it that made him different in some way from the people in the dún, even from the Druids and the poets?

Then Patrick, his eyes fixed on them, with that look which later won converts in every place, told them of his faith; the faith that was his from infancy but unrealized until he had lost all of happiness and home. He told them of what he learned up there on Slemish. Oh! he saw more than the golden eagle overhead, or the kites or the falcons. He heard more than the bleating of the deer or the bark of a fox near its mountain earth. The children believed his every word. They had listened to the bards and to the shanachies; they had seen strange things done by the Druids. But this sun-burnt herd-boy with his wonderful eyes seemed more powerful, more compelling than any of them. These stories of his must be true and they would believe him, and follow him and his God, if need be, till death. And the old story relates that the boy became in later days the Bishop of Granard and his sisters were nuns at Clonbroney in Longford.

But Milcho, so the legend goes, had a dream one night that he saw Patrick come into the dún, surrounded by flames so that his face was a flame of fire. Milcho fought the flames off but his three children were devoured by them. Awaking, the king sent for his herd, and like

## PATRICK ON MOUNT SLEMISH

the eastern kings to their prophets, he told his dream and asked what it might mean. Then Patrick answered him: "The flame which you have seen, O King, issuing from me is my faith in the Holy Trinity, with which I am wholly fired and enlightened, and which hereafter I hope to diffuse by my preaching. But in your case my preaching will be fruitless, for you will repel the grace of God with obstinate mind, and die in your infidelity; but your son and your two daughters will embrace the faith, which will be preached to them, and the Holy Spirit will, by the fire of love divine, burn out of their hearts all their sins and vices. Moreover, they will serve God in justice all the days of their lives."

If this story be true one gathers that Milcho made no drastic retort to his swineherd's speech. But, unlike his children, he took no heed of the message. Perhaps he just scoffed at his slave.

So the years went by until six had passed since that terrible day on the British coast when he was dragged down to the boats, losing sight of his sister. The agony of home-sickness had lessened with the healthy distraction of hard work. He was now a fluent Irish speaker. He knew the ways of the king's household, loved the king's children, had his own friends among servants and farmhands, loved his dogs, and had a kindly feeling to the people of this beautiful island. Still he could never forget his own land, his father's house, and that pleasant country villa where his happiest days had been spent. If only he could hear word of his family. Were they alive? How did life go with them, with his other relations, with his friends in the Roman colony? If only he might know. He prayed and prayed. Often alone on a summer night in his sheeling in the wood he could cry without shame, and pray that some day he might see them again. And even in his ill-fed life he

## SAINT PATRICK THE TRAVELLING MAN

managed to fast, hoping to conquer his body yet more.

So one night the wonder befell; he heard a voice in his sleep. It said: "Thou fastest well, thou art soon to go to thy fatherland." And again after a time came the voice: "Lo, thy ship is ready."

Now comes a part of the story that is very wonderful, yet no history expresses surprise over it. The ship was not on the coast near by, not in the port where Patrick had landed, but 200 miles away. The more likely theory of two advanced is that he found a ship sailing, as he thought, for Britain at Inverdea, at the mouth of the Vartry River, close to the present town of Wicklow. This seems a more probable place than Killala, which has been named.

Saint Patrick's *Confession* tells us:

"And again after a little time I heard the divine voice saying to me: 'Lo, thy ship is ready!' And it was not near at hand but distant about 200 miles. And I had never been there; nor had I any knowledge of any person there. And thereupon after a little I betook myself to flight, and left the man with whom I had been for six years, and I came in the strength of God, who prospered my way for good; and I had no cause to fear anything until I came to that ship."

This journey of 200 miles made by a penniless slave through an unknown, dangerous country full of warring tribes, with dangers of wolves and wild boars, of thick forests and deep morasses, is as wonderful in its way as the migration of birds. Patrick was led by faith as the birds are by instinct. One likes to believe that he found kindness and hospitality as he went. It must have been so or he would have died by the way. Some good

## PATRICK ON MOUNT SLEMISH

woman gave him food each day; there was a seat by a fire for him often, or a bed in the straw. He heard kind voices and he met pitiful glances. He found Irish hospitality and blessed it as he went that long and desperate journey in faith.

Let the story be his own now:

“And on the very day I arrived the ship left its place, and I asked that I might have leave to sail with them; but it displeased the Captain, and he replied harshly with anger: ‘On no account seek thou to come with us.’ When I heard this, I left them to go to the hut where I was lodging: and on the way I began to pray; and before I had finished my prayer I heard one of them calling loudly after me: ‘Come quickly, these men are calling thee,’ and forthwith I returned to them. And they began to say to me: ‘Come, we take thee in good faith, make friendship with us as thou pleasest.’ And on that day I refused to suck their breasts through fear of God; but still I hoped that some of them would come to the faith of Christ, for they were heathen, and on that account I stayed with them—and forthwith we set sail.”

There were, it seems, many dogs on board, probably those beautiful Irish wolf-hounds, of which a few live a restricted life in Ireland to-day. Then, they must have been the most useful breed of dog for defence and for sport. Patrick was well used to them in Milcho's kingdom, and his kind heart must have been distressed for their subsequent sufferings when they and their masters wandered in hunger through unknown land. Whether these dogs were, as Archbishop Healy thinks, the hounds of a raiding party, or whether they were part of the cargo of a trading vessel, we do not know.

## SAINT PATRICK THE TRAVELLING MAN

Indeed, the whole story of the voyage is absolutely vague as to places. Patrick's habit of mind, fostered by his long meditations, dreams and communings on Slemish, seems to have produced indifference to the material side of any adventure. His *Confession* is a spiritual apology, it is not a biography. The facts we long to know he does not tell us. He is dwelling on the immaterial side of his mission. There is doubt about the port from which he sailed. Dr. Healy has a well-supported case for Killala, but Dr. Bury leans towards Inverdea, near Wicklow. All that we know is the saint's story, written much later:

“And after three days we made land, and for twenty-eight days we journeyed through a desert, and food failed them. And one day the shipmaster said to me: ‘What sayest thou, Christian? Thy God is great and almighty; why then can you not pray for us? For we are in danger of starvation. It will be hard for us if we ever see a human being again.’ Then I said plainly to them: ‘Turn earnestly and with all your hearts to the Lord my God, to whom nothing is impossible, that He may send you food for your journey until you be filled, for everywhere he hath abundance.’ And by God’s help it so came to pass. Lo, a herd of swine appeared on the road before our eyes; and they killed many of them: and spent two nights there: and were well refreshed, and their dogs also were sated, for many of them had fainted from hunger and were left half-dead by the way. And thereafter they gave greatest thanks to God, and I became honoured in their eyes; and from that day they had food in abundance. They also found wild honey and offered me a part. But one of them said: ‘It is an idol-offering’—thanks be to God, I took none of it thereafter.”



## PATRICK ON MOUNT SLEMISH

Now the saint relates a dream, which to us may seem a nightmare likely to follow upon food taken after long starvation, but to him it had a significance which he never could forget:

“Now on that same night when I was sleeping, Satan tempted me strongly, which I shall remember as long as I am in this body. And there fell on me as it were a huge rock, and I had no power in my limbs. But whence it came into my spirit I know not that I should invoke Helias. And thereupon I saw the sun rise in the heaven, and whilst I kept invoking Helias, Helias, with all my might, lo, the splendour of the sun fell upon me and shook off from me all the weight. And I believe I was aided by Christ my Lord, and that His Spirit was even then calling out on my behalf.”

Then followed a period which he describes as a second captivity:

“I heard a Divine voice saying to me: ‘For two months yet thou shalt be with them!’ And so it came to pass, on the sixtieth night thereafter the Lord delivered me out of their hands. Moreover, on our journey He provided us with food and fire and shelter every day, until on the tenth day we all reached our destination.”

At some period, vague in point of time, he reached his old home in Britain and was welcomed as one from the dead. He tells that his kinsfolk welcomed him “like a son,” which suggests that his own parents, as he had so often feared, were dead. Perhaps the aunt, of whom tradition speaks, played her old part of mother. It is certain that they all delighted in him, the lost boy who had grown into a self-reliant young man, earnest, gentle, strong. They did not want him ever to leave them.

## SAINT PATRICK THE TRAVELLING MAN

There seemed strong reason to keep him—all that he could do among his own people if he were a priest. So love would have forged fetters to hold him, but life had only given him this rest before his real work began.

### CHAPTER III

## PATRICK ON THE CONTINENT

FOR some years of his manhood Patrick was studying, meditating, praying in monastic settlements on the Continent. His vocation, that call of the voices from Ireland, did not come at once with his freedom. The monastic ideal, which always he admired and fostered, was quickened in these years of retreat and unconscious preparation.

Following the story, as Archbishop Healy tells it, Patrick somehow made his way to Gaul and reached Tours where that great Saint Martin, his uncle, if legend be true, had established a monastic colony, about two miles from the town. The Bishop of Tours, as St. Martin was, preferred to live in a wattled cell, while the monks, like so many rock pigeons, lived in holes in the cliff's face in this curious isolated valley. Whether Patrick saw him alive we cannot tell, but it seems that here he put himself to school. "The tradition of his presence there is still very vivid at Tours, and one of the rock-hewn cells is pointed out to the visitor as that in which he dwelt. These cells are as yet in a remarkable state of preservation, in the very face of the steep escarpment overlooking the Loire. . . . They were airy and dry, and, although dimly lighted, might still be used as sleeping chambers or small oratories. . . . Outside the cells is a level platform of rock, not more than ten feet wide, but forty feet over the road beneath. . . . This rocky platform looks south over the river and far away into a richly-wooded, undulating and very fertile country.

## SAINT PATRICK THE TRAVELLING MAN

. . . The fare of the monks might be scanty, and their beds be hard—a rug covering the naked rock—but when they emerged from their cells to the rocky platform before their door, they could at least feast their eyes on a glorious scene of beauty.”

There is a quaint story told of this period; that Patrick suffered so much from the scanty fare that he somehow obtained a piece of pork and hid it so that he might cook it and eat it later in solitude. But a strange being appeared to him, eyes behind and before in its head. Patrick, scared by the beast, asked it: “What art thou? Who sent thee here?”

“I am a servant of God,” said this monster, “and with my eyes in front I see the ordinary actions of men, but with those behind I saw a certain monk hiding pork under a barrel that he might not be caught.”

More miracles follow this one, and the pork is changed into fishes for the brethren. But the likelihood is that Patrick was often hungry here as he had been on Slemish.

The Tripartite Life records that it was at this monastery that St. Patrick was tonsured, receiving the tonsure from St. Martin himself, so that the uncle gave his special blessing to one who was his nephew and now his spiritual son. And though the younger man was to be the saint of Ireland, yet St. Martin had also great honour in that country, his feast of Martinmas being a time of special rejoicing.

But Patrick had other monastic homes, and he made there friends whom he longed to see again when his mission took him to Ireland. He wrote of his wish, suppressed for the sake of his Irish, to go back to Britain and “even unto Gaul to visit the brethren, so that I might see the face of the saints of my God—God knows I greatly desire it.”

The monastic preparation for his public life was a long one. It lasted for many years. One period was

## PATRICK ON THE CONTINENT

spent in Lérins, an island in the Mediterranean, not far from Cannes. The island when St. Honoratus first went there, was reported to be full of snakes; but he, like St. Patrick in Ireland, must have banished them. With the dedicated zeal of true monks, the brethren redeemed the island from its untilled thickets. Wells were dug (monks were always lovers of good water) and the island was cultivated for the use of the anchorites who came there for prayer and study.

Small as it was, this community had great influence. Men of note for their lives and learning were there—Hilary, afterwards Bishop of Arelate; Maximus, Bishop of Reii; Vincentius, who taught and wrote in the cloister; Eucherius, who composed a treatise in praise of a hermit's life; Faustus, a student of ancient philosophy.

Among such men Patrick, who had had no chance of bookish education after his sixteenth year, felt himself ignorant, a little boorish. It was a humiliation that he could never forget, this sense of being unscholarly. It was not enough for him that his fluent Irish speaking was to help him in winning the country when Palladius, the first messenger from the Church, had failed.

One feels that the modern phrase "inferiority complex" fits this anxiety over his poor "Latinity," his lack of early training in bookish lore and graces of style, which is expressed again and again in the *Confession* with a sort of hurt humility that others should have these things against him.

In Lérins anyway the young monk must have found rest and comfort for his soul in the gracious fatherly ways of Honoratus, who "had the arms of his love wide open to receive all who came to his lonely island," caring for them "with more than the love and tenderness of a father." Monks came from many parts of the world, speaking different tongues, but in this island "they found home and country and kindred."

## SAINT PATRICK THE TRAVELLING MAN

Of practical work St. Patrick must have seen much that helped him in his own mission. Every art and craft is useful to a missionary. Here in the island the brethren built a church. With their hands they rooted out the wild brake. They cut the trees and quarried the stones, planted fruit-trees and corn and vines, until the place was fruitful and beautiful. Perhaps agriculture was a new art to Patrick, whose training had been in the care of beasts, cattle, and sheep and swine.

Under the guidance of his guardian angel Victor, the old books tell, Patrick went for a time to another community in the Camargue, an island formed by two branches of the Rhone, an island not in the sea, but lying between the Alps and the sea, called in old days "the Island of Arles." Possibly this colony of monks formed a daughter-house to Lérins, and Patrick went to help in the establishment of the new community.

It may have been here that he first met St. Germanus of Auxerre, who had so much influence on his future. Germanus became his guide and best friend, a man whom Patrick could love and honour—"soldier, statesman, bishop and saint all combined in the nobly born and highly accomplished Bishop of Auxerre."

It is impossible to give the exact time of that dream which decided Patrick's lifework and kindled the fire unquenchable of which his fire on the Hill of Slane was but a symbol. From this night followed his sainthood. The dream united in one coherent message all those experiences and hopes and trials which had been his since his captivity in Ireland. The "Moving Finger" was now writing his orders, and, trained as he was by long years of cheerful obedience, he, like St. Paul, was "obedient to the vision."

The dream came at some time when he was among his kinsfolk in Britain, back again it may be in that pleasant village which we have pictured as near the Severn.

## PATRICK ON THE CONTINENT

He thought that he saw in his dream his friendly guardian angel Victor.

"I saw, in a vision of the night, a man coming as if from Ireland, whose name was Victoricus, with very many letters. And he gave one of them to me, and I read the beginning of the letter purporting to be the 'Voice of the Irish,' and whilst I was reading out the beginning of the letter I thought that at that moment I heard the voices of those who dwelt beside the wood of Focluth, which is by the western sea; and thus they cried, as if with one mouth: 'We beseech thee, holy youth, to come and walk once more amongst us.' And I was greatly touched in heart, and could read no more, and so I awoke."

If this call came before the years of monastic life, then Patrick must have felt the need of a long training and remained in quiet faith and unhurried preparation until his way should be made plainer—"Towards Ireland of my own accord I made no move until I was almost worn out."

It seems that those haunting fears about his lack of learning made him uncertain that he could really be called to this work, in spite of the dream.

But the call of those voices from Ireland was urgent in his heart. Did the thought of Milcho's three children influence him? The ties with Ireland must have been strong.

The decision once taken, Patrick became a man of action, but carefully prepared action. He had still a period of learning before him, a time of training, and he must be sure of his marching orders. He was a servant of the Church, not a free lance. He determined to sail with support and resources and fellow-workers, an accredited messenger and in touch with those few Christian communities already planted in Ireland. He must be officially recognized before he started.

## SAINT PATRICK THE TRAVELLING MAN

So Patrick went off to Auxerre to wait and to study. Here quite soon he was ordained deacon, but fourteen years passed between his ordination and his setting forth on his mission. There were difficulties in the way, distrust and uncertainties, all the delays which for ever will hamper the plans of zealous Christians. To this period belonged the harsh criticism that hurt him so much, and the betrayal of a confidence by his dearest friend. But troubles were tempered, we may be certain, by joys. It is hard sometimes for this present period, so different in the form of its ideas, to realize the warmth of humanity and friendship that was found in these monastic houses. The spirit of to-day is neither cloistral nor ascetic, and it can hardly credit happiness and humour to these men, so severe to their bodies, so scornful of the world's goods. But such books as Miss Helen Waddell's *Mediæval Latin Lyrics* and *Wandering Scholars* must convince us that these monks and clerics loved their friends, their schoolboys, their gardens with the warmth of pure hearts, and with a freshness of interest which we in our noisier, distracted age may lack. Do not these lines sent by Walafrid Strabo to the Abbot of St. Gall speak of happiness?

“So might you sit in the small garden close  
In the green darkness of the apple trees  
Just where the peach-tree casts its broken shade,  
And they would gather you the shining fruit  
With the soft down upon it; all your boys,  
Your little laughing boys, your happy school,  
And bring huge apples clasped in their two hands.”<sup>1</sup>

Patrick, with no prefix of saint to him then, loved Germanus, his great chief, and the years he spent under this influence were happy years.

But there was ever the call of Ireland in his heart. He could say, “I am ready, Lord, send me.” But the choice

*Mediæval Latin Lyrics*, by Helen Waddell, p. 54.



## PATRICK ON THE CONTINENT

of a man lay with Pope Celestine, and he wished to send Palladius, who was well known to Patrick. Celestine was thinking more about support for the few Christians in Ireland than of the conversion of the country. It may be that the Irish Christians had asked for him; anyhow, Palladius was sent to Ireland in A.D. 431.

The story of this missionary journey of Palladius to Ireland is a very short one. He came and returned within a year. We learn too that he went from Ireland to North Britain and died there.

Memories of his coming still linger in Wicklow. He landed at Inver Dea, a much used port in those days. "It may be," says Dr. Bury, "that Tigroney (Tech na Roman, House of the Romans) on the high wooded hill beyond the river at Avoca, was the site of one of his churches. And you find a memory in Donard in this same county of Wicklow."

At Donard we feel with some assurance that we are at one of the earliest homes of the Christian faith in Ireland. Cellfine, his third and most important church, where he kept his sacred relics, has been identified by Father Shearman with Killeen Cormac,<sup>1</sup> that wonderful little shrine of old memory, which lies near Colbinstown, and about three and a half miles from Dunlavin.

So the Palladian mission ended without much success and the way was clear for Patrick. After the death of Palladius he was consecrated Bishop by a certain Amatorex. An old story tells that at the Consecration three choirs joined in the Responses—a choir of angels, a choir of choristers, and a choir of the children in Focluth's Wood. So with authority from Christendom behind him he set forth.

<sup>1</sup> The existence of this church was denied by Brash. And those two experienced excavators and archæologists, Dr. Macalister and Dr. Lloyd Praeger, found no evidence for it. See Report on Killeen Cormac. Royal Irish Academy.

## CHAPTER IV

### PATRICK RETURNS TO IRELAND

Now Patrick's second journey to Ireland was very different from his first. Then, all had been terror, confusion and haste. Now there was the orderly departure of a bishop on a journey that demanded much preparation and forethought. He was no youth now, but a man of authority and great power. Through all the history and legends we get that sense of a dominant personality, of the influence of a man ruled by one great idea. That he was lovable we discern, with those individual traits that endear; a man hasty and impetuous, quick to bless and to curse too in a punitive sense if evil thwarted good. One cannot read of him without thinking of that other great missionary, St. Paul. For the one was spiritual twin brother to the other, and Patrick's own nephew wrote a poem to that effect.

On this journey he needed a company of fellow-workers, and much ecclesiastical equipment, for he expected to found religious communities like those he had known on the Continent. And he must have money for the expenses of this great undertaking. He was a practical man and knew that he would have to pay the way of his first churches.

His retinue seems to have been a large one. According to the *Book of Armagh* he travelled with "a multitude of bishops, priests, deacons, readers and others . . . several were his own blood relations, one was his sister's son." And Dr. Douglas Hyde tells us that with him in Ireland went always "his episcopal coadjutor, his

## PATRICK RETURNS TO IRELAND

psalm-singer, his assistant priest, his judge—originally a Brehon by profession, whom he found most useful in adjudicating on disputed questions—a personal champion to protect him from sudden attack and to carry him through floods and other obstacles; an attendant on himself, a bell-ringer, a cook, a brewer, a chaplain at the table, two waiters, and others who provided food and accommodation for himself and his household. He had in his company three smiths, three artificers, and three ladies who embroidered. His smiths and artificers made altars, bookcovers, bells, and helped to erect his wooden churches; the ladies, one of them his own sister, made vestments and altar-linens.”

As regards a champion to defend him, it seems that his task was honorary, for St. Patrick in every contention appears to have stood up for himself and cowed the opposing force by his moral courage.

If it were urged against him by cavillers in his later years that he sought to enrich himself, he denies it. He repudiated this charge of money-making with the passionate, righteous anger St. Paul expressed at similar injustice.

“When the Lord ordained clergy everywhere by my mediocrity, and I gave them my ministrations gratis, did I ask from any of them so much as the price of my sandal?—tell it against me and I shall restore you more. . . .

“Sometimes, too, I used to give presents to the Kinglets besides the hire I used to give their sons, who accompanied me. . . .

“You know also of your own knowledge how much I spent on those who guided us through all their districts, which I used to visit more frequently, for I think that I distributed to them not less than the price of fifteen men. . . . Still I spend and will spend more. . . .

“Nay, Christ the Lord was poor for our sake. But

## SAINT PATRICK THE TRAVELLING MAN

I, poor and wretched, even should I wish for wealth I have it not."

So, though the retinue sounds fine, St. Patrick was still the poor servant of Christ, spending for others.

At last all were aboard and the sails set for that western sea which separated Britain from Ireland. Those voices were calling more and more clearly to Patrick's ears. And again to his eyes the blue hills of Ireland lay on the horizon.

The boat was making for Inver Dea, a harbour near the present town of Wicklow. So to the eyes of that band of noble adventurers the hills of Wicklow and Wexford and Dublin showed dim on the horizon, then clearer and clearer, Bray Head and that Red Spear mountain which we call Sugar Loaf, Djouce, and all the folded hills that stretch to Glendalough.

But the landing was not a pleasant one, for the chieftain of that place came out with his people, and with a shower of stones repelled the Christians so that they had to put to sea again and sailed northward to the Bay of Malahide, where they hoped to get fish, but got none and had to fare on bread and water. So they went farther to a little island, now Inis Patrick, not far from Skerries on the mainland. But the quest for food was still in vain, and there were many hungry folk. So the saint himself sailed to a place on the coast (now Gormanstown) and at last found hospitality and relief for his spiritual family. And he gained more than food at the home of Sescnen, his host. The story relates that, weary as he was, Patrick lay down on the grass to sleep, his companions about him. Then young Benen, or Benignus, son of Sescnen, gathered a bunch of sweet-smelling flowers and put them in the saint's bosom. The more matter-of-fact elders disapproved, telling him not to wake their Bishop. But Patrick woke up, hearing the reproof and seeing the crestfallen boy with the flowers.

## PATRICK RETURNS TO IRELAND

“Trouble him not,” he said, “he will be the Heir of my Kingdom,” which came true when Benignus became Coadjutor Bishop of Armagh.

Here in Sescnen’s Valley, near Gormanstown, Patrick built his first church,<sup>1</sup> leaving priests for it, and then sailed for the mouth of the Boyne, where they caught fish and fared in comfort.

From the mouth of the Boyne he looked towards the north. Slieve Donard and all the Mourne Mountains loomed blue in the distance. From the north had come that call to him, those dream letters in the angel’s hand. The Wood of Focluth which sent this message to him has always been placed in Tirawley, now the north of Mayo, near Foghill, and from this belief has arisen bewilderment and its consequent reasonings as to when the young Patrick had been in this western district of Ireland, that he could be recalled there by the voices from the Wood of Focluth. But recently that deep scholar, Dr. Eoin MacNeill, has interpreted the mystery. He reasons that this Wood of Focluth was Killultagh, the woody district of the Ulaidh.

“This name was formerly given to a district of much wider extent than it now denotes which lay on the eastern side of Lough Neagh, in the southern part of the county of Antrim.”

The points of so learned a discussion can be best appreciated by scholars, but the conclusion brings us to a place that Patrick would have known. His heart did yearn over the West of Ireland too, but his mission there came later.

Now he was bound for the north. He passed by Connaille, now Louth, where the great Cuchulain once held magnificent sway; by Cooley, the land of the coveted Brown Bull of Cooley, now Omeath; Carlingford, with its mountains, Slieve Foy, a serrated crest

<sup>1</sup> Some annalists give the founding of this church later in the story.

## SAINT PATRICK THE TRAVELLING MAN

against the sky—still onward where Mourne's Mountains "sweep down to the sea," until the boat reached Inver Slan, the mouth of Strangford River. At the head of this ocean river, out of the tide's rush, at a spot now near Audley Castle, they anchored, those weary travellers. They waited for a while, probably for high water, and then glided with the tide to a sheltered nook at the mouth of the Slan River, now the Fiddler's Burn. Here they hid the boat beneath overhanging branches and went ashore to rest after the weariness of the sea. And presently they came near a place which must always be named with Patrick, Saul, where stood a barn, a kindly sheltering place in windy weather.

It seems that at once the saint loved and desired this spot for his own.

Now the first native to see them was a swine-herd. Quick to spy danger, the herd went off to his master Dichu, the chieftain of this district. Dichu came quickly with his dog, maybe one of those great wolf-hounds which Patrick knew so well. The chief, seeing these men as raiders, set the dog at them.

But St. Patrick stood up to the danger as he always did. One can picture the dog suddenly quailing before the stranger's fearless eyes, rather before them than before the Latin verse of a psalm hurled at his head: "*Ne tradas, Domine, bestiis animas confidentes tibi.*"

Dichu followed on his dog. The two men met face to face. A long look passed between them. The pagan chieftain was the bishop's bondman. No need for miraculous stories, raked together by the old chroniclers. Patrick had the strength of spirit that moves mountains.

The two must have talked together for a time because Dichu, "a just man" in his own old faith, believed the new Gospel and was baptized, the first man thus to receive baptism in Ulster. Then Dichu longed to give his teacher some offering and he begged St. Patrick to

## PATRICK RETURNS TO IRELAND

accept the barn. This was a gift most welcome. And Patrick made a blessing for him :

“ God’s blessing on Dichu  
Who gave me the Barn.  
May he have hereafter  
A heavenly home, bright, pure and great,  
God’s blessing on Dichu—  
On Dichu and his children ;  
No child of his or grandchild  
Whose life will not be long.”

So Saul became the first church in Ulster, the first church in Ireland where St. Patrick celebrated the Eucharist. The place is about two miles from Downpatrick. And near Saul is another place of memory, the Wells of Struell, where the waters were blessed by the saint. Tradition says that he slept in the caves whence flow the waters, his mantle around him wet with spray, his head upon a stone.

But St. Patrick did not linger with the kindly Dichu beyond the winter months. He had come to visit his old master, Milcho ; to convert him, if that might be, anyway to restore to him the price of the slave herd-boy who ran away.

A momentous journey this must have been to the saint. These familiar places known in his youth, he recognized them one by one. Slemish was in sight, rising up in lonely state from its plain. How full of memories was this mountain ; scene of joys and agony, of long communing with God.

I think that Patrick walked alone, ahead of his companions, so eager was he to see the old dún, the palace of his master. Surely he was alone when he stood on that spot on Slemish where he looked over the Valley of the Braid River towards the king’s dún and saw it in flames.

Was this some magic ? For Milcho was a Druid, the

## SAINT PATRICK THE TRAVELLING MAN

story says, master of strange crafts and counterfeits. No, the palace was burning, and fiercely a wooden house could burn.

For two or three hours St. Patrick stood gazing at the sight. His companions had joined him and stood by him waiting some explanation.

"Yonder," said the saint, "is the fire of Milcho's house; he has burnt himself lest he should believe in God at the end of his life."

It must have been later that they heard the history of the fire. Milcho had got rumours of the coming of his one-time slave and a terror had seized him. He would not hear of this slave's God. He would shut himself up in his dún with all his gold and silver and burn himself rather than change his heart and his life.

Overwhelmed by the sight, St. Patrick turned and went back to the kind care of Dichu, his friend and disciple. For a spell of peace he stayed there in Saul, preaching and teaching, founding churches, enjoying the friendship of the chieftain and grateful for this breathing space before his next great adventure.

One story of this peaceful period is beautiful in the telling, because it brings into the history that little girl, daughter of Milcho, Bronach by name, who had once befriended her father's slave. How far she had remembered those stories of Christ the Hero, told her once by a swine-herd out in the fields in summer, we do not know. Perhaps, like Mary, she had pondered them in her heart. And now her heart would be strangely stirred by her father's death in the fire his own hands had made, and the news of a great preacher, a priest of the Christian faith who was moving all hearts and converting the men of Ulster.

She was a married woman now with a son, Mochae, who herded swine—no dishonourable task in those days.

Patrick met the lad in just such a place as he had



## PATRICK RETURNS TO IRELAND

frequented when he was a herd and his heart went out to him. Finding the boy willing, he had him instructed by his clerics, and in course of time ordained him. Much later in life this boy, who was grandson to the stubborn old Druid, King Milcho, became a bishop ruling the island monastery of Noendrum, or Island Mahee.

## CHAPTER V

### PATRICK COMES TO TARA

BEFORE we follow St. Patrick on his great adventure, the storming of paganism in its high places, let us picture the life on Tara at this period, and see what was the Old Order that the New Order had come, at first to absorb, later to challenge.<sup>1</sup> For the Old Order has often so much good in it, that its ruthless destruction by the New seems a brutal iconoclasm. But Patrick was constructive and conciliatory as far as conscience allowed.

Yet to the fighting Christian faith there was no parleying with the enemy. Now, as we look back upon the strife, we see that king and saint were in the hands of Destiny as tools used in the setting of a new act in the drama of history.

The Druids, years before Patrick's coming, had prophesied the change, that their acute wordly wisdom foresaw by the signs of the times:

“Bare-poll will come over the wild sea,  
His mantle hole-headed, his staff crook-handled,  
His altar in the east of his house,  
And all his family shall answer  
Amen, Amen.”

What powers and position had the Druids in Ireland? Patrick was destined to challenge their power again and again; as in Pharaoh's court Moses challenged the priests.

<sup>1</sup> Tara was abandoned soon after the death of King Diarmaid in A.D. 558. This was due to the solemn cursing of St. Ruadhan, who with his clergy rang bells and sang psalms, walking in procession round the hill. His reason was far from a just one.

## PATRICK COMES TO TARA

To this day the relics of Druid worship and power remain in Ireland—dolmens and cahirs, pillar stones and circles. The skill that raised these stones seems indeed a necromancy, so it is not strange that sorcery was attributed to these learned and powerful men. As well as being priests of a religion which was a form of sun-worship, the Druids were seers, men of science and councillors of State. They were of high birth, related to the kings, if not kings themselves. Their influence was boundless, it was based largely on fear. Their lesser gods were in wells and hills and in the stones that they set upright. That they offered human sacrifices in Ireland seems quite uncertain, it is based upon such small evidence. They could understand the messengers of the new faith in that they too believed in a Supreme Being and in a future state, though this was a doctrine of the transmigration of souls.

Druids were the support of the power of Tara. They were all about the High King, at his table, at his councils. And they were bitterly opposed to this faith which was coming to them from the east. They saw in it the fall of their power.

Youth had been attentive to them, for often they were tutors. The great Irish saint Columcille had a Druid for teacher; and King Laoghaire (Leary) sent his daughters to be brought up by two Druids in Connaught. The Druids were the accepted teachers and counsellors, also the diviners and soothsayers. They used peeled yew rods in their divinations and believed in the faery power of rowan branches, yew and hazel.

Any important step by some king or warrior would require the advice of the Druids and their forecasting of the future. Their help in battle was invoked, for they were supposed to make magic with the elements, raise fogs and storms and produce madness by throwing straw, accursed by incantations, in their enemies' faces.

## SAINT PATRICK THE TRAVELLING MAN

Missionaries of to-day find something of the same opposing force in the witch-doctors of Africa. Always such power is conservative, retrograde, yet with much of the good that lies in an "Old Order" behind it. The Druids belonged, certainly, to an age that was splendid, heroic and chivalrous in Ireland.

There is a strange old story that Cormac Mac Art, the High King, was killed by the power of the Druids, because he would not worship the idol they brought to him. It seems that he had heard the Christian Gospel and had meditated upon it in the quiet places of the woods where he and his queen spent their last years.

Cormac Mac Art died in A.D. 266, before ever Patrick came to Ireland, but the story of his faith in a God greater than idols was proved by his defiance of the Druids. They, in their anger, "turned the Maledictive stone" against him and he died of a fish bone in his throat. But he had ordered that he should be buried facing the East, at Rosnaree, away from his heathen forbears at Brugh na Bóinne.

Another strange conversion to Christianity was the King Connor MacNessá, who is said to have been present in spirit at the Crucifixion. At sight of that cruelty he fell into a fury and agony trying to rescue Christ, so that he rushed among the trees, hewing and slashing till an old wound burst in his head and he died from the strength of his pity.

Tara, still a name like a torch in the romantic history of Ireland, is to-day a lonely, meagre little hill. It seems lost in that sea of grazing land which forms the rich county of Royal Meath. But Meath is not a very beautiful district; it belongs to the great central plain of Ireland, and from Tara you will see league upon league of pasture stretching to the dim blue of distant plain. Here and there rises a hill. One you must note, the wooded hill of Slane where that fire was kindled which put out

## PATRICK COMES TO TARA

the fire of Tara. The flame of the New Order leapt from Slane to Tara, devouring the Old Order.

Without some scholar to trace out the site of the old palace it is hard to reconstruct this court of the High King of Ireland. But a mental picture may raise the old magnificence on this lonely little hill.

Tara consisted of a vast enclosure, holding a number of raths, and houses inside these raths. "The buildings seem to have been constructed of the timbers of lofty trees, planted side by side, probably carved into fantastic shapes upon the outside, while the inside walls were closely interwoven with slender rods, over which a putty or plaster of loam was smoothly spread, which, when even and dry, was painted in bright colours, chiefly red, yellow and blue. The roofs were formed of smooth joists and cross-beams, and probably thatched with rods and rushes, much in the same manner as the homes of the peasantry to-day. The floors appear to have been of earth, carefully hardened and beaten down, and then covered with a coat of some kind of hard and shiny mortar. No doubt some fine barbaric effects were realized in these buildings, some of which, as is evidenced by the description of Cormac's Teach Midhchuarta, must have been immense. There were as many as seven dúns, or raths, round Tara, each containing within it many houses and each surrounded by a mound, or vallum, planted with a stockade like a Maori pah. The finest house of all, painted in the gayest colours, planted in the sunniest spot, and provided overhead with a balcony, was reserved for the ladies of the place, and was called the *grianan* (greenawn), or sunny house."<sup>1</sup>

Another house was kept for those hostages whom the King took in battle. Nial, as we know, was named from his Nine Hostages, representing nine kings. The "Mound of the Hostages" is still seen.

<sup>1</sup> *Literary History of Ireland.* Douglas Hyde.

## SAINT PATRICK THE TRAVELLING MAN

The magnificence of Tara was due chiefly to the King Cormac Mac Art, a romantic figure in legend and history. It was this Cormac who built the first water-mill in Ireland, which was at Tara; this to please his mistress and slave, Ciarnait, who was bearing the queen's displeasure every day by grinding the heavy stones. As the birth of her child drew near she found her labours so weary that she begged her royal lover to send to her native Scotland (she was a Pictish princess) for the plan of a water-mill such as was used there. Science and love thus brought a water-mill to Tara.

For the appearance of Cormac Mac Art as he was seen in Tara, I give the description from an old writer, quoted by Dr. Hyde. It brings back those scenes, evoked in imagination of the world that Patrick knew. For this great King's splendour was upheld by Laoghaire (Leary), the High King, at St. Patrick's second coming to Ireland.

"Beautiful," says the old writer, "was the appearance of Cormac in that assembly; flowing and slightly curling was his golden hair. A red buckler with stars and animals of gold and fastenings of silver upon him. A crimson cloak in descending folds around him, fastened at his neck with precious stones. A torque of gold around his neck. A white shirt with a full collar, and intertwined with red-gold thread upon him. A girdle of gold, inlaid with precious stones, was around him. Two wonderful shoes of gold, with golden loops upon his feet. Two spears with golden sockets in his hands, with many rivets of red bronze. And he was himself, besides, symmetrical and beautiful of form, without blemish or reproach."

It is a fact that Ireland was pre-eminent for its wealth of gold in Western Europe at this time. This can be appreciated by those who see the collection of gold ornaments in the Museum in Dublin.

Now let us picture this Cormac as he moved in state about Tara.

## PATRICK COMES TO TARA

There was, every third or seventh year (history seems uncertain on this point), a great Féis or Assembly held at Tara, and all the men of Ireland who could come gathered there. The Feast began three days before Samhain (November 1), and lasted three days later. It was a time for making laws, for testing the annals and genealogies of Ireland, and for recording these things in a National Record.

Cormac Mac Art, the High King, presided over these Assemblies. With him he had ten courtiers who rarely left him. These were a prince of noble blood, a Druid, a physician, a Brehon (or law-maker), a bard, a historian, a musician and three stewards.

This state, Keating tells us, was preserved by the king till the time of Brian Boru, with a Christian priest supplanting the Druid.

There is a delightful passage in a treatise ascribed to this same great Cormac—*The Instruction of a Prince*—a sort of catechism of a prince's duties.

Says the young prince, Cairbré:

“O grandson of Con, O Cormac, what are the duties of a prince at a banqueting house?”

“A prince on Samhain's Day (November 1st) should light his lamps, and welcome his guests with clapping of hands, procure comfortable seats, the cup-bearers should be respectable and active in the distribution of meat and drink. Let there be moderation of music, short stories, a welcoming countenance, a welcome for the learned, pleasant conversations, and the like, these are the duties of the prince, and the arrangement of the banqueting house.”

Now to house his lordly guests, princes and chieftains, Cormac Mac Art built a great hall, the Teach Miodh-chuarta (Toch Mee-coo-ar-ta), which could accommodate a thousand persons, and be used as assembly room, banqueting hall, and sleeping chamber. It had fourteen doors, seven to the west, seven to the east.

## SAINT PATRICK THE TRAVELLING MAN

The length of the hall was seven hundred and sixty feet and its breadth was nearly ninety. "In the middle of the hall, running all the way down between the benches, there was a row of fires, and just above each fire was a spit descending from the roof, at which the joints were roasted. . . . The King sat at the southern end of the hall, and the servants and retainers occupied the northern."<sup>1</sup>

Dr. Hyde quotes Keating's description of it. This was taken by Keating (that lonely outlaw historian in the Glen of Aherlow) from old authorities.

"The nobles, both territorial lords and captains of bands of warriors, were each man of them always attended by his own proper shield-bearer. Again their banquet halls were arranged in the following manner, to wit, they were long narrow buildings with tables arranged along both the opposite walls of the hall; then along these side walls there was placed a beam, in which were fixed numerous hooks (one over the seat destined for each of the nobles), and between every two of them there was but the breadth of one shield. Upon these hooks the shanachy hung up the shields of the nobles previously to their sitting down to the banquet, at which they all, both lords and captains, sat each beneath his own shield. However, the most honoured side of the house was occupied by the territorial lords, whilst the captains of warriors<sup>2</sup> were seated opposite to them at the other. The upper end of the hall was the place of the ollavs (bards), while the lower end was assigned to the attendants and the officers in waiting. It was also prescribed that no man should be placed opposite another at the same table, but that all, both territorial lords and captains, should sit with their backs towards the wall, beneath their own shields. Again, they never admitted females

<sup>1</sup> *Literary History of Ireland.* Hyde.

<sup>2</sup> Probably the Fianna, Cormac's Militia.



## PATRICK COMES TO TARA

into their banquet hall; these had a hall of their own in which they were separately served. It was likewise the prescribed usage to clear out the banquet hall previous to serving the assembled nobles therein. And no one was allowed to remain in the building but three, namely a Shanachy and a *bolsgaire* (marshal or herald), and a trumpeter, the duty of which latter officer was to summon all the guests to the banquet hall by the sound of his trumpet-horn. He had to sound his horn three times. At the first blast the shield-bearers of the territorial chieftains assembled round the door of the hall, where the marshal received from them the shields of their lords, which he then, according to the directions of the Shanachy, hung up each in its assigned place. The trumpeter then sounded his trumpet a second time, and the shield-bearers of the chieftains of the military bands assembled round the door of the banquet hall, where the marshal received their lords' shields from them also, and hung them up at the other side of the hall, according to the orders of the Shanachy, and over the tables of the warriors. The trumpeter sounded his trumpet the third time, and thereupon both the nobles and the warrior chiefs entered the banquet hall, and then each man sat down beneath his own shield, and thus were all contests for precedence avoided amongst them."

With these scenes in mind, one can picture the stage-setting of this great act in the drama of Irish history. On this stage saint and king will stand face to face, and the Old magnificent Order struggle with the New Order, righteous and austere.

Now we return to Patrick, who had just founded yet another church, this one at Bright. His kingly convert this time was Ross, the brother of Dichu, his friend. Ross was more reluctant, but gave his allegiance at last.

So far things had not been difficult; but Patrick was planning, with that clear-sighted defiance of fear, which

## SAINT PATRICK THE TRAVELLING MAN

is courage, to storm the headquarters of paganism. He had no illusions about the matter. Probably the fight would mean death for him. If so, he was ready.

As to the days and exact facts of the contest, recent historians may argue. But the story has taken hold of the ages and its essential truth must have been handed down to posterity, and in its traditional form it shall now be given.

Patrick discussed the plan of campaign with the friendly chief Dichu. Warning had already been sent to Dichu by the High King to beware of the tonsured priest and yield him no obedience. But Dichu's reply was to advise Patrick to go straight to Tara and stake everything on the contest there.

So the saint and his company embarked at Strangford Lough, probably in a curragh, the type of boat much used at the time. It was light and could be drawn easily over the fords of rivers. They had a prosperous voyage down to the mouth of the Boyne, and left the boat with Patrick's nephew Lomman at some spot near where Drogheda stands to-day.

During the last days of Holy Week in this year 433, the saint, with ten or twelve of his clerics, set off for Tara by land and arrived at the Hill of Slane (then *Ferta fer Feicc*—the graves of Fiacc's men) on the evening of Easter Eve.

Up there on the Hill of Slane what did this band of Christians see if the evening was a clear one? Below them lay the plain of Meath, Magh Breg—the Beautiful Plain. To the north on a very clear evening they might see the Mourne Mountains, to the south-east the blue folds and peaks of the beloved and gentle hills of Wicklow; very far off, perhaps, the long undulation of Slieve Bloom. And there, about ten miles to the south, was Tara of the Kings, the citadel which they must win or die.

## PATRICK COMES TO TARA

Ireland is a land which looks so peaceful that its many battles seem to break the quiet with a shattering vehemence, and after them the peace flows back. A spring evening in that land of woods and pasture and river would be ringing with bird song, and gay with coming life. And ten miles off there was revelry on Tara.

But it was growing dusk, pale light in the west and a veil of twilight creeping over the woods. It was time to light and to bless the Paschal Fire. This new fire was to be struck from a flint and blessed, and then the Paschal candle would be lighted from it, emblem of the Light of the World which shone out on Easter morning. The fire must burn through the night to be ready at dawn on Easter Day.

“It happened, then, that that was the time at which was celebrated the high tide of the heathen, to wit, the Feast of Tara. . . . On that night, then, the fire of every hearth in Ireland was quenched, and it was proclaimed by the King that no fire should be kindled in Ireland before the fire of Tara, and that neither gold nor silver should be taken (as compensation) from him who should kindle it, but that he should go to death for his crime. . . .”

“As the folk of Tara were biding there, they saw (at some distance from them) the Paschal consecrated fire which Patrick kindled. It lighted up the whole of Mag Breg. Then said the King:

“‘That is a breach of a ban and law of mine: go and find out who hath done so.’

“‘We see,’ say the wizards, ‘the fire and we know that unless it is quenched on the night on which it was made, it will not be quenched till doomsday. He, moreover, who kindled it will vanquish the kings and lords of Ireland unless he is forbidden.’

“When the King heard that he was mightily disturbed. Then said the King: ‘This shall not be. But we will

## SAINT PATRICK THE TRAVELLING MAN

go,' saith he, 'and slay the man who kindled the fire.' Then his chariots and his horses were yoked for the King, and they went at the end of the night to the graves of Fiacc's men.

"'Thou shouldest take heed,' say the wizards, 'not to go to the place where the fire was made, that thou mayst not do reverence to the man who kindled it; but stay outside and let him be called out to thee that he may judge that thou art the King, and that he is the subject, and we will argue in your presence.'

"'It is good advice,' saith he (the King), 'it shall be done as ye say.'

"They came thereafter and unyoked their horses and their chariots before the graves. Patrick is called out to them and they made a rule that no one should rise up to meet him, lest he should believe in him. So Patrick arose and went forth and saw the chariots and the horses unyoked. Then he chanted the prophetic verse, 'Some trust in chariots and some in horses; but we in the name of the Lord our mighty God.'

"They were biding before him with the rims of their shields against their chins, and none of them rose up before him save one man only in whom was a nature from God, namely Erc, son of Deg. He is the Bishop Erc who is to-day in Slane of Mag Breg."<sup>1</sup>

So far the story from the "Tripartite Life."

The scene is enacted at night in the play of light and dark. Patrick comes out of the fire-lit tent and stands silhouetted against the glow. King Laoghaire and his Druids are in the shadow, the light playing on their faces. Beyond them the horses and chariots and serving men. Then Patrick, standing boldly before them, gave his message from his own High King, the message of "Peace on earth, goodwill to men." He proclaimed his faith boldly, that doctrine of the Trinity, so much

<sup>1</sup> An ancient oratory of St. Erc exists beside the River Boyne to-day.

## PATRICK COMES TO TARA

enforced in his teaching, with tidings of the Incarnation and Resurrection.

From this point the old stories are full of miraculous happenings, of blaspheming on the Druids' part and cursing and vengeance on the saint's. But Patrick had a greater force than miraculous reprisals behind him, and a gospel that comes to save the world rather than to curse it. Whether some ill befell the chief Druid Lochru at this point, or whether the King's anger broke out suddenly, it seems that Laoghaire shouted: "Lay hands upon the fellow." And Patrick, seeing that they were about to attack him, cried out words familiar to him in his long psalm study: "Let God arise and let His enemies be scattered, let them also that hate Him flee before Him."

At that, the story has it, a tumult broke out in the darkness; the horses went off in fright, and the wind whirled the chariots through the fields. "And each rose up to the other in the Assembly, so that each of them was after slaying the other."

After this tumult there were only three left with Patrick, Laoghaire and his Queen Angas, and another. Then the Queen sought with her own wiles to save the King, and she came to the saint and said: "O just and mighty man, do not destroy the King. The King shall come to thee and shall do thy will, and shall kneel and believe in God."

So Laoghaire pretended to kneel, but his heart was set to kill Patrick. And he said to him: "Come after me, O cleric, to Tara, that I may believe in thee in the presence of the men of Ireland." Then he set ambushes on every path between Slane and Tara.

Then Patrick set off with his clergy and the young Benen, as a gillie with them, carrying the holy books.

The saint blessed them at starting and gave them a strong courage. And the story has it that the heathen

## SAINT PATRICK THE TRAVELLING MAN

who were waiting in ambush for them saw no man pass, but only eight deer running swiftly in single file, and a fawn behind them, carrying something on his shoulder. And Patrick made and chanted this song as he went, so that it is called in the old books a Lorica, "The Deer's Cry," but to-day it is called "The Breastplate of Saint Patrick," and it is sung every year on his day, the seventeenth of March :<sup>1</sup>

### THE DEER'S CRY

(Commonly called "*The Breastplate of Saint Patrick*")

#### I

I bind to myself to-day  
The strong power of an invocation of the Trinity,  
The faith of the Trinity in Unity,  
The Creator of the elements.

#### 2

I bind to myself to-day  
The power of the Incarnation of Christ with that of  
His Baptism,  
The power of the Crucifixion with that of His Burial,  
The power of the Resurrection with the Ascension,  
The power of the Coming to the sentence of Judgment.

#### 3

I bind to myself to-day  
The power of the love of Seraphim,  
In the obedience of Angels,  
(In the service of Archangels),  
In the hope of Resurrection unto reward,  
In the prayers of the noble Fathers,  
In the predictions of the Prophets,  
In the preaching of Apostles,  
In the faith of Confessors,  
In the purity of holy Virgins,  
In the acts of Righteous men.

<sup>1</sup> "I arise to-day," instead of "I bind to myself to-day," is the translation of the Irish "Atomruig" given in *The Irish Liber Hymnorum* (Bernard and Atkinson). But the usual version "I bind" is now dear and familiar to most of us.

## PATRICK COMES TO TARA

### 4

I bind to myself to-day  
The power of Heaven.  
The light of the Sun,  
The whiteness of Snow,  
The force of Fire,  
The flashing of Lightning,  
The velocity of Wind,  
The depth of the Sea,  
The stability of the Earth,  
The hardness of Rocks.

### 5

I bind to myself to-day  
The power of God to guide me,  
The might of God to uphold me,  
The eye of God to watch over me,  
The ear of God to hear me,  
The word of God to give me speech,  
The hand of God to protect me,  
The way of God to prevent me,  
The shield of God to shelter me,  
The host of God to defend me,  
Against the snares of demons,  
Against the temptations of vices,  
Against the lusts of nature,  
Against every man who meditates injury to me,  
Whether far or near,  
With few or with many.

### 6

I have set around me all these powers,  
Against every hostile savage power,  
Directed against my body and my soul,  
Against the incantations of false prophets,  
Against the black laws of heathenism,  
Against the false laws of heresy,  
Against the deceits of idolatry,  
Against the spell of women and smiths and druids,  
Against all knowledge which blinds the soul of man.

## SAINT PATRICK THE TRAVELLING MAN

7

Christ protect me to-day  
Against poison, against burning,  
Against drowning, against wounds,  
That I may receive abundant reward.

8

Christ with me, Christ before me,  
Christ behind me, Christ within me,  
Christ beneath me, Christ above me,  
Christ at my right, Christ at my left,  
Christ in the fort,  
Christ in the chariot seat,  
Christ in the poop.

9

Christ in the heart of every man who thinks of me,  
Christ in the mouth of every man who speaks to me,  
Christ in every eye that sees me,  
Christ in every ear that hears me.

10

I bind to myself to-day  
The strong power of an invocation of the Trinity,  
The faith of the Trinity in Unity,  
The creator of the elements.

11

Salvation is of the Lord,  
Salvation is of the Lord,  
Salvation is of Christ,  
May Thy salvation, O Lord, be ever with us.

The High King and his queen went back that Easter morning to Tara. Laoghaire, son of the great Niall of the Nine Hostages, did not like defeat. He was puzzled by this strange and opposing force. Moreover, Patrick had shaken his spirit. One cannot doubt that it was the force of Patrick's character in every case which proved



## PATRICK COMES TO TARA

all-conquering. Miracles will always be matters for dispute, "about it and about." But the greatest miracle is the impress that the character of a man can make on history.

Whether or no the saint wreaked miraculous vengeance on the Druids will be questioned by many, but the fact is that by virtue of the miracle called "grace" he conquered Tara.

Tradition has in most cases so much behind it that often it is "the more" that is proven by criticism rather than "the less." So let us have the story.

On this Easter Day, a pagan feast day for him, Laoghaire had called together sub-kings and chiefs and Druids, and they held a high banquet. The king was, perhaps, crest-fallen and bewildered by the night's contention. But a High King, acting as host, would conceal his uneasiness.

There they sat, these chieftains, shields over their heads, backs to the wall, poets and Druids up near the king, when suddenly, come from God knows where, Patrick is standing in the hall before them with five of his clerics. No one had seen a door open, or heard them come in. They were there and you could but gape at them in wonder.

Laoghaire had told the assembly, by the counsel of his Druids, that no one was to rise up for these Christian priests. No one moved for a moment, then two men rose to their feet, heedless of the king, looking only in homage into the eyes of this stranger. One was Dubthach,<sup>1</sup> the chief of the poets of Ireland, the other a student, his nephew, a poet too, Fiacc by name.

Disguising his anger, Laoghaire the High King bade Patrick be seated near him and near Lucat-Mael, his other chief Druid. But Lucat-Mael sought occasion to poison the guest; this the saint foiled by a miracle, and the

<sup>1</sup> Pronounced Duo-huck.

## SAINT PATRICK THE TRAVELLING MAN

poison ran out of the cup. Next, Lucat-Mael challenged Patrick to a contest in wonder-working on the plain outside, so that all might see. The tournament lasted long. They both brought snow on the earth and darkness and fire. But it seems that the Druid could not undo his wonders until the next day, while Patrick could disperse the snow and the darkness. Finally Lucat-Mael fell victim to his own devices and perished in flames.

So at last Laoghaire made a formal submission to this new Power. But his heart remained set in its old paganism, and there is no record that he gave more than a grudging protection to the Christians. But this permission to preach the Gospel and a promise of safety for himself opened a high road from Tara for Patrick.

## CHAPTER VI

### PATRICK DESTROYS CROM CRUACH

ST. PATRICK, armed now with royal protection, went forth on his missionary journeys, while Laoghaire, grim and mortified, remained in defiance. "Niall, my father," said he, "when he heard the Druids' prophecy regarding the coming of the faith, enjoined me not to believe, but that I should live a pagan and should be buried in the topmost part of Tara like warlike men."

And so it was; Laoghaire, like his forebears, was buried in the ridge of his own royal rath, standing, spear and sword in either hand, facing the men of Leinster, whom he hated. And because he would not forgive the Leinster men he would not accept this Gospel of forgiveness.

Here in Royal Meath the saint was at the heart of the country. Meath extended from the Shannon to the sea, and from Slieve Bloom to Dundalk, or to the Fane River beyond the town of Louth. Five great roads led to Tara from all parts of Ireland. These roads were of great use to the saint, who travelled, as we know, with a big retinue. Whenever he entered a new district or sub-kingdom, St. Patrick went straight to the king or chieftain and sought his conversion and co-operation. If these were won, he founded a church and equipped it with priest and necessary belongings.

From Tara it seems that St. Patrick went hastily to the Ford of Trim to meet his nephew Lomman, who had brought the boat so far and had himself converted Fortchem, a young man of importance, and later Fort-

## SAINT PATRICK THE TRAVELLING MAN

chem's father and mother. There had been a very happy meeting when the mother found that Lomman was from Britain. So was she, and that was a bond. And Fedilmid, her husband, a son of King Laoghaire, no less, could speak the same tongue. So that Patrick, arriving at Trim, found a welcome and the pleasant atmosphere of home and friendship after the hostilities of Tara.

But never might he rest in peace, for always the urgency of his message was upon him, as it was with St. Paul the apostle. He felt he must go to that great Tailteann Fair whose only outward relic is a rath at Telltown in Meath; but of its games and contests there has been a revival in Ireland to-day.

Patrick had a bad reception at this place from Coirpre, son of Niall, and a brother of Laoghaire. This Coirpre tried to kill the saint and scourged the servants who would not betray him. And still worse Patrick fared at another place of ancient repute, the Hill of Uisnech. This was a centre of pagan worship, a place of tremendous importance in antique history. Here a grandson of Niall opposed Patrick and killed some of his followers.

But with Conall, another son of Niall, the saint did better. Conall was a willing convert and a genuine, for he would prove faith with a gift, land for a church close to his own house. Patrick measured out the ground, with his crozier, we are told, and a church twenty yards from end to end arose, so that it was called the Great Church of Patrick, in the place that is Donaghpatrick to-day.

Another interesting foundation was at a place which is now Granard. In the religious community there founded was one who had known St. Patrick as his father's slave. Gosact was one of Milcho's children who had befriended the captive herd-boy. And now this Gosact was a Christian and in a monastery, where long after this time his tomb was to be seen.

## PATRICK DESTROYS CROM CRUACH

But now, as ever in his adventurous life, Patrick was eager to fight paganism in its high places. He had no easy habit of mind as regards religion. To him evil was visible, tangible, personal. There was a Devil and his angels—there were demons concealed sometimes in the gods of the pagan, in such idols as Standing Stones, revered by the Druids.

So he turned northward towards Magh Sleacht (Moy Slaughter), or the Plain of Adoration, where the great King idol Crom Cruach stood in a circle of twelve lesser idol stones. The site of this idol worship is near the present village of Ballymagauran in the County Cavan. This idol, a stone covered with gold and silver, while his companion stones were covered with bronze, received the greatest veneration. It may have represented the sun ruling over the twelve seasons.

An ancient poem in the *Book of Leinster* declares that it was “a high idol with many fights.”

I quote the poem as I find it in Dr. Hyde's *Literary History*:

“He was their God,  
The withered Cromm with many mists,  
The people whom he shook over every harbour,  
The everlasting kingdom they shall not have.

To him without glory  
Would they kill their piteous wailing offspring,  
With much wailing and peril  
To pour their blood around Cromm Cruach.

Milk and corn  
They would ask from him speedily  
In return for one-third of their healthy issue,  
Great was the horror and scare of him.

To him  
Noble Gaels would prostrate themselves  
From the worship of him, with many manslaughters  
The plain is called Moy Sleacht.

## SAINT PATRICK THE TRAVELLING MAN

In their ranks stood  
Four times three stone idols  
To bitterly beguile the hosts,  
The figure of Cromm was made of gold.

Since the rule  
Of Heremon, the noble man of grace,  
There was worshipping of stones  
Until the coming of good Patrick of Macha.”<sup>1</sup>

Patrick, his crozier, “the Staff of Jesus,” in his hand, came striding towards the stone circle.

When he was yet some way off, he saw the people prostrating themselves before old Crom; among them, the story tells, King Laoghaire himself. Then the saint, being very angry, gave a great shout, and he went faster and approached the idol to strike it with his crozier, but before the staff touched it the stone fell over on its side. Then Patrick cursed the demon that inhabited the idol and it came out for all to see. And so Patrick must fight it and in the contest his brooch or fibula, fastening his cloak, fell off and was lost in the herbage. So when the demon was laid, the saint did not rest till the grass was pulled up and he found his brooch. A human touch this in the story.

Many were converted there and believed and were baptized; and the saint founded a church, which Archbishop Healy thought was at Oughteragh, about two miles off.

The identification of the places given by the Archbishop is most interesting. He spent a long summer day in trying to reconstruct the scene; and to any traveller in Ireland his conclusions are of real value.

“In our opinion Edentinny is the undoubted Plain of Adoration, between Fenagh and Ballinamore. . . . It

<sup>1</sup> The fact of blood sacrifices remains unproven in spite of this poem, for the line “they kill their piteous wailing offspring” may be a later embellishment of the plainer facts.

## PATRICK DESTROYS CROM CRUACH

is a limestone ridge about four hundred yards long and eighty to ninety yards wide. On the eastern side the ridge is bounded by a steep escarpment rising from the low ground. From the base of this rocky wall there issues full born, like the fountains of the Jordan, a strong, clear and rapid spring, powerful enough to turn a mill, coming out, as it were, from the very heart of the hill. . . . This ridge itself is fitly called Longstones, which appears to be an attempt at giving an English equivalent for the Irish name Cairginns. . . . On the flat summit of the ridge there are still remaining traces of two circular stone enclosures such as the Druids used, and close at hand are the wonderful stones or slabs which have given their name to the place. One is now prostrate—an immense slab about eighteen feet long by four broad; the other is still standing, but inclining to the west, and is partially buried in the soil. Another, close by, is also standing, but inclines to the east. Between them is a third slab, nearly sunk in the soil, and of small dimensions. The whole place is suggestive of Druidical worship, and we have no doubt it was the true scene of the striking incidents narrated in the Life of St. Patrick.”

## CHAPTER VII

### PATRICK CROSSES THE SHANNON

ST. PATRICK'S desire now was to cross the Shannon and to reach those western lands where the Christian faith would find it hard to make headway. Yet there is a strange little evidence of Christian worship having been used before the saint came.

When Patrick ordained one, Ailbe, as chief priest at Doogary, he told him of a stone altar in a cave (thought by Dr. Healy to be close to the church of Shancoe) where he would find four glass chalices at the angles of the altar.

"Beware," he said, "of breaking the edges of the excavation." How did the saint know this? It seems a riddle whose answer we cannot guess.

Of all the journeys that Patrick made it is impossible to tell in a small book. An idea of them can be gained very effectually by studying the map on which they are marked in Dr. Healy's comprehensive book.

At this time Patrick met great opposition from the Druids, but his own force of character overcame them and we find him receiving a royal dwelling from Hono, a kingly Druid, and building a church at Elphin, where he consecrated Assicus as bishop, though, we gather, a nephew, Bite, was to do the hard work, with assistance in church decoration from his mother. But Assicus was an excellent craftsman, a coppersmith. He made altars and square patens and book-covers.

Now, a sad little story is told of this Assicus. Some scandal was raised about him, a lie no doubt. But he



## PATRICK CROSSES THE SHANNON

fled from it up to Donegal to the mountain district about Glen Columcille. And seven years he spent on a little island, Rathlin O'Beirne, where now lives only the lighthouse-keeper. But still he continued his copper-work as a true craftsman would. Then his monks went to seek him and they found him in the Glens and urged him to return. But he was old and unwilling for the journey, and he died at a place now called Racoon, between Ballyshannon and Ballintra.

Now Patrick would go to Cruachan, so he went by the high ridge above the little lakes and marshes. He encamped for the night and at sunrise went to the Well of Clebach, on the eastern side of Cruachan Hill, with his clergy. What happened there is told in beautiful form in the "Tripartite Life":

"The clerics sat down by the well. Two daughters of Loegaire, son of Niall, went early to the well to wash their hands, as was the custom of theirs, namely Ethne the Fair and Fedelm the Ruddy. The maidens found beside the well the assembly of clerics in white garments, with their books before them. And they wondered at the shape of the clerics, and thought that they were men of the elves or apparitions. They asked tidings of Patrick:

" 'Whence are ye, and whence have ye come—are ye of the elves or of the gods?' And Patrick said to them—

" 'It were better for you to believe in God than to enquire about our race.' Said the girl who was elder—

" 'Who is your god? and where is he? Is he in heaven or in earth, or under earth or on earth? Is he in seas or in streams, or in mountains or in glens? Hath he sons and daughters? Is there gold and silver, is there abundance of every good thing in his kingdom? Tell us about him, how he is seen, how he is loved, how he is found? If he is in youth or if he is in age? if he is ever living, if he is beautiful? if many have fostered his

## SAINT PATRICK THE TRAVELLING MAN

son? if his daughters are dear and beautiful to the men of the world?' To this torrent of questions St. Patrick gave a long answer.

"Now these girls had been sent to the home and fosterage of two Druids, by their father, the great Laoghaire of Tara. This fosterage was a custom of the day and conferred honour on the Fosterer.

"After an instruction in the faith, the saint asked the eager girls if they believed and wished to be baptized. They assured him of their belief and he straightway baptized them and blessed the white veil on their heads.

"And they asked to see Christ face to face. And Patrick said to them: 'Ye cannot see Christ unless ye first taste of death, and unless ye receive Christ's Body and His Blood.' And the girls answered: 'Give us the sacrifice that we may be able to see the Spouse.' Then they received the sacrifice and fell asleep in death; and Patrick put them under one mantle in one bed; and their friends bewailed them greatly."

Then came one Druid and wept for his charge, Caplait was his name. But the saint made all clear to him and he, too, believed and was tonsured in the Christian fashion. Then Mael, the other Druid, came up in anger and with threats, saying he would win back his brother; but argument prevailed at last with him and he, too, received the tonsure which was as the branding mark made by this Herd of God.

This Hill of Cruachan was renowned in pagan history, for it was the dwelling of Queen Maeve and scene of her loves and her battles. It remained for long the chief royal residence of the Gaelic kings of Connaught.

Near the royal rath was the royal burying-place, perhaps the most celebrated pagan cemetery in Ireland, where lay kings, queens, warriors, and "fierce, fair women." The faery cave of Cruachan was there, and

## PATRICK CROSSES THE SHANNON

Dathi's memorial pillar of red granite. Again I quote Dr. Healy for the modern relics of this history:

"The enchanted cave can still be seen; the royal cemetery can still be traced; and Dathi's pillar still stands erect above the hero's grave. But the royal palace is merely a green mound overlooking all the wide-spreading plain of Magh-Ai."

All through the old stories of these journeys there are human touches which show St. Patrick as a very natural human being, just such a man, impulsive, a little hasty, as you may find leading an expedition into the wilds. All was upon his shoulders, everything had to be solved by his brain, all the tiresome details of campaigning, with the pettiness and irritation of self-seeking followers. The Frenchmen in his party were restive at this time. They wanted to settle down. They wanted "livings" and a quiet life. But still their Bishop must approve. We can see them grumbling at his elbow until he, standing on the Hill of Oran, pointed with his finger to a site about five miles to the north, Baslic, which the Franks might choose if they liked. And they did like.

But for Patrick himself there was no rest, no quiet settling into monastic life. He must always follow the quest of souls, urged from place to place. There is no rest for such a man, any more than there was for his great kinsman in the Gospel, St. Paul. "In journeyings often, in hunger, in fastings." Yet the human side of Patrick, lovable it is, clung to certain places. And he had a love for Oran (or Uaran<sup>1</sup>), and made a poem for the place:

"Uaran Gar!

Uaran, which I have loved, which loved me.

Sad is my cry, O dear God,

Without my drink out of Uaran Gar,

Cold Uaran,

Cold is everyone who has gone from it (with sadness).

<sup>1</sup> In Co. Roscommon, Oran or Uaran means a cold, fresh spring of water.

## SAINT PATRICK THE TRAVELLING MAN

Were it not my King's command,  
I would not wend from it, though the weather is cold.  
Thrice I went into the land,  
Three fifties was the number (with me)  
But with thee . . .  
Was my consolation, O Uaran."

From Oran he went to seek the Kings of Connaught, and converted six chieftains, marking the victory for his faith with three stones, inscribed with three names of Christ—Jesus, Soter, Salvator. This was at a place near Camfree, which is near Tulsk.

There are still many wells of St. Patrick in the West of Ireland with old holy memories of his coming. So that a sense of his presence can be felt to this day in nearly all parts of the country.

Presently we find the saint near Boyle; very angry because his horses were stolen by the godless sons of Erc. After that he is travelling Roscommon by Frenchpark and Loughglinn, always preaching, settling disputes, founding churches, spinning a great web of Christianity through the country. It seems that he usually spent a week or fortnight in each new settlement, preaching, baptizing, and building a church. The instruction of his young priests sounds very hasty, as we read of it. In a fortnight how could they learn to repeat the psalter, read the missal and follow its ritual? But these young men were probably well trained in the schools of the Bards or Brehons and used to learning much by heart. Often they travelled with the Bishop for a time, or if he left them it was with one of his own company who would give instruction and guidance.

The wildness of a district could never daunt either spirit or body when the saint was on the march. He travelled through the marshy flats of Mayo, and we find a trace of him at Toberpatrick, two miles from Ballyhaunis. From there he went by Kiltullagh, Dunmore,

## PATRICK CROSSES THE SHANNON

Kilbannon and Killoower and Donaghpatrick, near Headfort, in Galway. Tradition has him at a Patrick's Well between Aughrim and Kilconnell. We hear of him in the lake country on the confines of Mayo and Galway, then in the district of Castlebar, till off he goes westward, founding more churches; one at Aghagower (a corruption of Achad-Fobair, the Field of the Spring).

This place he loved and wished that he might linger there. He said:

“ I would choose  
To remain here on a little land,  
After faring round churches and waters  
Since I am weary, I wish not to go further.”

But the angel, Victor, braced him to fresh effort:

“ Thou shalt have everything round which thou shalt go,  
Every land  
Both mountains and churches,  
Both glens and woods  
After faring around churches and waters  
Though thou art weary, still shalt thou go further.”

But not even half his work was yet done. So, with a very natural sigh, Patrick left Aghagower. And he left there, the story says, two small trout in a stream that still flows by the roadside in front of the church.

“ Angels will keep them there in it,” he said, “ for ever.”

## CHAPTER VIII

### PATRICK ON THE REEK

*(Now Croaghpatrick, then Cruachan Aigle)*

ST. PATRICK as he left Aghagower could see the great cone of Cruachan Aigle over the low hills to the west. And he wished very greatly for solitude and talk with God. That peak lured him to climb it as the mountains lure men of spirit in all times. As Moses had seen God on Sinai, as Christ had been in the hilly wilderness for forty days, so Patrick yearned for the mountain places of earth and spirit. His mission needed it; he could not give out endless supplies of grace and knowledge without replenishment for himself. It was time for him to go apart into the wilderness for a little while and set his soul in order and see with God this work he had in hand.

It was the Saturday before Shrove Tuesday when he made the ascent, and he was to remain until Easter Eve. His chariot-driver, Totmael by name, died and was buried at Murrisk just before Patrick made his long fast. Murrisk is marked to-day by the ruins of a famous Augustinian monastery. It is a place lulled to sleep by the song of a little stream near by, and the only brethren now are the jackdaws.

One who has made the pilgrimage of the Reek told me lately of such a scene as Patrick may have watched unfold beneath him as he stood on the summit.

Under the pilgrims lay a sea of mist, hiding the earth







## PATRICK ON THE REEK

from them, shutting them in, as it seemed, into a still solitude between mountain and sky. Then, as they stood there, the sun banished the mists, and beneath them lay the glory of Clew Bay with its innumerable islets, and beyond the bay the Atlantic.

Sunlight, moonlight, starlight, the saint saw on land and water. Great storms must have beaten the mountain while he was there, and after them the still peace of a rare spring day.

Curious stories of this time are told by Tírechán. He tells us: "And Patrick went to the heights of the mountain over Cruachan Aigle, and stayed there forty days and forty nights. And heavy birds were towards him, and he could not see the face of heaven or earth or the sea."

The "Tripartite Life" has a long account of the argument between Patrick and Victor, his angel. According to this story:

"The mountain was filled with black birds, so that he knew not heaven nor earth. He sang maledictive psalms at them. They left him not because of this. Then his anger grew against them. He strikes his bell at them so that the men of Ireland heard its voice, and he flung it at them, so that its gap broke out of it, and that (bell) is Brigit's Gapling. Then Patrick weeps till his face and his chasuble in front of him were wet. . . . Then the angel went to console Patrick, and cleansed the chasuble, and brought white birds around the Rick, and they used to sing sweet melodies for him."

After this kindly act of the angel's, there follows a curious dialogue. It is a long and truly Irish case of bargaining in which the angel acts as "middleman." Patrick is intent on winning as many souls for Heaven as he can wrest from the bargain. He grows petulant and defiant as he makes his demands, and each time he makes his bid, he threatens that he will not leave the

## SAINT PATRICK THE TRAVELLING MAN

Reek until it is granted. The angel seems most anxious that he should go, but his votary asks yet further and further blessings.

“Thou shalt bring,” saith the angel, “yon number of souls out of pain” (as many as the birds that had surrounded the Reek) “and all that can fill the space which thine eye reaches over the sea.”

“That is not a boon to me,” saith Patrick; “not far doth mine eye reach over the sea.”

“Then thou shalt have both sea and land,” saith the angel.

But the saint remained troubled and petulant. He felt himself beset by those evil spirits which he fought all his days.

“Fear hath seized me,” he cried,  
“Ten hundred heads contending against me,  
Dark men with hideousness of teeth,  
With the colour of death,  
Thirteen sure thousands,  
Ten hundreds in every thousand are they.”

Then he asked the angel: “Is there aught else that He granteth to me besides that?”

“Seven persons on every Saturday till Doom are to be taken out of Hell’s pains.”

But Patrick stands out for twelve.

“Thou shalt have them,” says the angel, “and now get thee gone from the Rick.”

The saint wanted more. The bargaining continued as it might at an Irish fair. So many souls to be saved if they could repeat Sechnall’s hymn of St. Patrick.

“No—only the last four stanzas,” urged the saint. Victor agreed.

“What more?” asked the lonely watcher.

“A man for every hair on thy chasuble. . . .”

“Why! any saint will get that number! Seven persons

## PATRICK ON THE REEK

for every hair on my chasuble to be taken out of pains on the Day of Doom?"

"Thou shalt get that too," said the angel, "so now get thee gone."

"Not yet," said Patrick, "except God Himself drive me away."

"What else do you want?" said the angel.

"This," said Patrick, "that on the day when the twelve thrones shall be on Mount Sion, that is on the Day of Doom, I myself shall be judge over the men of Erin on that day."

"But this surely cannot be had from God," said the angel.

"Unless it be got I will not leave this mountain for ever," said Patrick, "and I will leave a guardian on it after me."

The angel went to Heaven, Patrick went to Mass. The angel came back at Nones. "How is that?" said Patrick.

"Thus," saith the angel, "all creatures, visible and invisible, including the twelve apostles besought the Lord, and they have obtained. The Lord said: 'There hath not come, and there will not come, after the apostles, a man more admirable, were it not for thy hardness.' What thou hast prayed for thou shalt have. Strike thy bell," said the angel. . . .

"A blessing on the bountiful King who hath given," saith Patrick, "and the Rick shall now be departed from."

From the Reek it is said that St. Patrick banished all snakes and poisonous reptiles into the sea.

Further boons claimed had been "that everyone doing penance even in his last hour will not be doomed to hell. That the barbarians shall never get dominion over us. That the sea will cover Ireland seven years before the Day of Judgment."

## SAINT PATRICK THE TRAVELLING MAN

The "Tripartite Life" adds a curious legend about the keepers of the mountains: "There are, moreover, keepers belonging to Patrick's household alive in Ireland still. There is a man from him in Cruachan Aigle—they hear the voice of his bell and he is not found—and there is a man from him in Gulban Guirt (Benbulbin), another on Slieve Donard, one on Drumman Beg to watch over Meath, a fifth at Clonard, and a sixth on Slieve Cua, the ridge overlooking the valley of the Blackwater."

Although this celestial bargaining between the Almighty and St. Patrick has the humorous quality of the old Miracle plays, yet it contains the great fact about the man who, coming to Ireland as a slave boy, died as a National Saint, that he would not be satisfied until he had won a mighty harvest of souls, until in fact he had won Ireland for God, and the promise of everlasting life for his spiritual children. There can be no greater picture of him than this, the lonely pilgrim wrestling in prayer for Ireland; a man so small in that vast scape of land and sea and sky, so great in soul that Cruachan Aigle was as a clod to the heights of his spirit.

There is a fine conclusion to the long struggle on the mountain. I take it from Dr. Healy's Appendix VI, Part 3:

"And to console Patrick the whole mountain summit was filled with beautiful white birds which sang most melodious strains, and the voices of the mountain and the sea were mingled with their melody, so that the Reek became for a time as it were the Paradise of God. . . . 'Now get thee gone,' said the angel, 'you have suffered, but you have been comforted. These white birds are God's saints and angels come to visit you and to console you; and the spirits of all the saints of Erin, past, present and future, are here by God's high command to visit their father and to join him in blessing this land and show

## PATRICK ON THE REEK

him what a bountiful harvest his labours will reap for God in this land of Erin.' ”

So Patrick descended from the mountain. It is 2510 feet high. The pilgrim's way is trodden each year by hundreds of people, and they see, as he saw, Clew Bay below them, all the mountains of the west with Nephin and Mweelrea, the islands of Achill and Clare, and farther off the Twelve Pins of Connaught, the Maam Mountains, and, perhaps, on the horizon the crest of Slieve League and the Donegal Mountains, and, like a great carpet, the bogs of Mayo stretched out below.

It is good to think of his going in a great peace that Easter Eve to his beloved Aghagower to be welcomed joyfully by kind friends—Bishop Senach, his son Aengus, who was then learning his catechism and the psalms, and Mathona, the nun.

For long ages there has been a custom of pilgrimage to the Reek. I have seen the pilgrims passing by in drenching rain on a Sunday in summer.

“When St. Patrick came down from the mountain on Holy Saturday, it is said that he and his followers knelt to give thanks in a field at the foot, now called the ‘Old Patron Field.’ It is immediately to the right of the path leading from the public road at Murrisk to the Reek. A ‘Patron’ is still held in this field to commemorate the saint's Thanksgiving Prayer.

“The road to the Reek is now called ‘Boher Na Miasa,’ *i.e.* the Road of the Dishes, because, it is said, refreshment was there provided for St. Patrick and his people as they came down from the Holy Mountain.”

We must suppose that the saint had spent the long fast of Lent alone, but that some of his faithful followers came to seek him at the end of his appointed retreat, on this Holy Saturday. They must have been full of fears for their Bishop through the stormy, cold days before Easter.

## CHAPTER IX

### PATRICK IN THE WEST

It is at this period, about 441, that Professor Bury places a visit made by St. Patrick to Rome, to report upon his Irish Mission to Pope Leo the Great, who was consecrated in 440. But Dr. Healy relates that the saint sent a messenger, Murris, to Rome and that relics were given to him for the Church in Ireland. However, Professor Bury refers for evidence to Tírechán, a seventh-century authority, who speaks of Patrick as going to Rome with Sachellus.

Here we are chiefly concerned with the saint's journeys in Ireland. And we find him going about Mayo in a period after his Fast on Croaghpatrick, by Drum, Balla, and Ballintober, waiting at Cloghpatrik and Manulla, and it is likely that he founded churches in the place which is now Castlebar and at Turlough, near Castlebar, where there is a Round Tower to prove antiquity and celebrity.

Then, like St. Paul, he determined to visit his new churches and returned through Roscommon by Boyle, where miracles were performed according to the old stories. A giant was raised from his grave and baptized, while another pagan, buried under a cross by mistake, was made to give an account of himself.

Later he crossed the Shannon at Athlone and, visiting his churches in Westmeath, came again to Tara.

On the road to Tara were the twelve sons of Amalgaid, a first cousin of King Laoghaire. They were going to lay the difficult question of the succession before

## PATRICK IN THE WEST

High King, for their father was now an old man. The chief competitors for the rule of Connaught were Aengus and Enda Crom, who, being nicknamed for his deformity as a hunchback, was not judged suitable to rule. But Conall, the son of Enda, was eager to defend his father's claim before Patrick and Laoghaire. Conall met the saint apart and gave him a message from the west—"All the children of Ireland call upon thee." Patrick was greatly moved by this repetition of that dream message of long ago. He became Conall's friend at once and helped him to enter the halls of Tara, from which the friends of his uncle and rival, Aengus, had excluded him. So Patrick told young Conall about that dream and the angel's message; and in return Conall told him of his longing to see his father receive justice as the eldest son of Amalgaid, his father so handicapped in infirmity.

Patrick advised him willingly: "Go now when the doors are open. Look for Eoghan, son of Niall, who is a faithful friend of mine, press his third finger secretly, for that is a token between us."

Now Eoghan was chief general at Tara, and when the young man gave him the sign, he asked at once: "What is Patrick's desire?" "To help me," replied the youth. So Conall was allowed to plead his father's cause and won the chieftaincy for him, though the land was to be divided between Aengus and Enda.

Then the sons of Amalgaid set out on their return to Tirawley, the district of northern Mayo about Killala. They went in twelve chariots and Patrick followed in the thirteenth chariot with the young Prince Conall. They went from Tara by the great north-western road through Meath and Longford, crossing the Shannon perhaps at the fords at Drumboylan.

But Aengus drove on ahead and begged his brothers to kill Patrick and young Conall. The brothers agreed to do this in the family territory of Corann in Sligo;

## SAINT PATRICK THE TRAVELLING MAN

but they repented the decision and would not slay the saint or his companions, their own brother and nephew.

So the chariots drove on through the west of Sligo, crossing the Ox Mountains, most likely by the valley of Lough Talt, descending to Ballina, where they crossed the Moy and came to Tirawley, the land of King Amalgaid. But Aengus was still intent on murder, and he went ahead and urged the Druids on religious grounds to slay Patrick, the messenger of the new faith. The Druids readily agreed and formed themselves into two bands.

Meanwhile the saint, with Enda and Conall, had stopped at a place, now Crosspatrick, to preach to the men of Tirawley and to baptize the converts. Patrick heard of the attack and prepared to meet it. Miraculous happenings converted one of the chief Druids and slew the other. But, again, we may be certain of the fact that the saint's courage won the day and dismayed men of lesser will. His way was now clear in Tirawley and he found himself at the Wood of Focluth.

As we have seen, Dr. MacNeill does not believe that this was the wood that had called to the younger Patrick, but thinks rather that the call was from the wood of his youthful days, that by Lough Neagh. But Patrick had yearned over the west and delighted to found his first church there, Donaghmore. We read of cures and wonders performed in this district, which have left their traditions in the neighbourhood of Killala, such as Disert-Patraic, the woodland round Meelick Lake, where lived a hermit who humbly accepted his penance of blindness because, in unregenerate days, he laughed at the stumblings of a blind man who came to the saint for cure.

According to Dr. Healy, portions of old Focluth Wood ("the oldest wood that ever grew in Eire was



## PATRICK IN THE WEST

Focluth Wood, and gloomiest ") are still existent around Meelick Lake, between Crosspatrick and Killala. At Killala we read of more miracles. In a short life of Patrick one cannot make record of each one. But, with Dr. Healy, we must follow the saint to Downpatrick Head, a place of magnificent scenery, and then back by way of Mullaghcross, which was probably the original seat of Druidism in Tirawley. A great stone circle surrounding a Druid altar is still to be seen and a monolith erected to Cairbre, son of Amalgaid. From Mullaghcross, Patrick probably crossed the Moy and founded a church at the southern point of the Peninsula of Ross.

On the Moy the saint met insults and a shower of stones from a tribe called the "Grecraide," and his retort, as usual, was severe, condemning the stone-throwers to ignominy.

But there was consolation, for at some point the young prince Conall met him. The elderly bishop loved this affectionate boy and, perhaps, half in fun said to him: "Thou too must take the crozier." Conall, a little reluctantly one fancies, answered: "If it is God's will I am ready." But Patrick answered: "Not so, for thy tribe and their heritage thou shalt be a warrior, bearing the crozier on thy shield, and thou shalt be Conall of the Crozier Shield and none of thy descendants bearing this shield shall be put to flight."

His next journey brought the saint to Sligo, and we find him at that enchanting place Ballysodare, and learn that one of his teeth fell out, a homely detail this, and that he gave it to Bishop Bron, who died in 511, having lived long at Coolerra.

Presently we find Patrick going south by Lough Arrow, Kesh and Gurteen, and the Curlew Hills. Then we hear of his chariot upsetting, and the saint, wet and angry, cursing half of the river, but not the other half, because Columcille would some day found a home there.

## SAINT PATRICK THE TRAVELLING MAN

Next, having turned westward from the Curlews, we hear of him in that place, so enchanted by faery lore, so romantic in history, secular and religious—I mean Drumahaire. So enthralled was St. Patrick with this lovely spot that he stayed there some time, even making plans to settle there; indeed, he left his foster-son Benignus there for twenty years.

But bound by those marching orders of his, Patrick was off and away by Manorhamilton and the Rosses and Drumcliff. And he blessed the Deowes River because the little boys who were fishing there gave him salmon. “And even little boys take fish there still,” says the “Tripartite Life.” Then the writer says: “Thrice now did Patrick wend across the Shannon into the land of Connaught. Fifty bells and fifty chalices and fifty altar-cloths he left in the land of Connaught, each of them in his church. Seven years was he a-preaching to the men of Connaught. He left a blessing with them and bade them farewell.”

## CHAPTER X

### PATRICK IN DONEGAL

To those who know and love Ireland there is a deep interest in following the travels of this great wandering saint, and in making a picture of him as he went through places, beautiful then as now.

For his appearance we have only a tradition recorded by Jocelyn, a monk who lived centuries later. He speaks of St. Patrick as of low stature. Certainly his strong man, MacCartan of Clogher, carried him over flooded rivers and fords. Above his tunic Patrick wore a white or grey habit of undyed wool, with a monk's hood and sandals. It seems certain that he was unusually hardy. That his nose once bled on a journey is the only record of any physical trouble that we are told. He knew four languages—British, Irish, French and Latin. But only by results can we gather the tremendous force of his personality.

Such is the man whose travels have covered the greater part of Ireland.

Now let us follow him from Bundoran to the banks of the Erne where Cairbre met him with resistance, but overcoming that, he went on between Assaroe and the sea. And in this period possibly passed Lent on an island in Lough Derg, from which fact arose the famous pilgrimage to St. Patrick's Purgatory, though the actual cave of the Purgatory cannot now be found.

The chief relic of the island is the idol stone, once covered in gold, which gave Clogher its name (Clogh-

## SAINT PATRICK THE TRAVELLING MAN

oir, golden stone<sup>1</sup>). A great description of the pilgrimage can be found in Carleton's *Tales* as regards his own period. But one may hear of it from any modern pilgrim to-day.

The saint came through beautiful Barnesmore Gap and Raphoe to the head of Lough Swilly and on to Ailech of the Kings, second only to Tara in importance. "The Grianan of Ely," as it is now called, stands above Derry. Patrick blessed the fortress.

He then went forth by Inishowen and by Moville, and through the County of Derry and close to Coleraine he crossed the Bann, and later, crossing the River Bush, he came to the ancient, famous territory of Dalriada, which is now Antrim. Dalriada was a mountainous land of brave men; some of them went forth to Scotland and founded the colony which gave ancestors to the royal family of that land. The saint was in that wild and lovely country which boasts the Giant's Causeway, Fair Head, the Glens of Antrim, and Dunseverick which he blessed. Dunseverick was then the strongest fortress of the Dalriads, a fortress on an insulated cliff, joined to the mainland now by a swaying rope bridge.

From Dalriada St. Patrick went back to Dalaradia, his own familiar country about Slemish, which he revisited.

This third time on Slemish must have been full of meaning and of thankfulness to him. Once more crossing the Bann, Patrick came from Antrim to Derry, lingered for forty days at Findafort, and passed on to Magherafelt, where he blessed a mother and her unborn daughter, later to be called Trea, from whom the church at Ardtrea is named.

We find him in the neighbourhood of Stewartstown and Dungannon and Coal Island. Presently he went to

<sup>1</sup> Joyce in his *Place-Names* disputes this, and makes the name Clochar—a stony place.

## PATRICK IN DONEGAL

the Kingdom of West Oriel, of which Clogher was the chief city.

To one who knows Clogher, the following stories are dear. This easy-going, peaceful village of lazing dogs and slow-moving carts, with its more recent memories of that great Irishman, Dean Swift, with his Stella and her friend Dingley; this dreamy little Clogher with its Cathedral church and Deanery, lying under the far-flung hills and moorlands of Tyrone, seems now remote from that antique glory it held in West Oriel.

The ancient fort is probably Rathmore, in the old episcopal demesne of Clogher.

But the story of MacCartan, the strong man of Clogher, must be told here. He it was who carried the bishop over rivers, who stood beside him at every dangerous meeting with the Druids and pagan chiefs. A great, kindly, patient servant he was to the unwearying saint.

Years of danger and hard work had gone over him, and he was growing older, and the sight of his native Clogher must have made him long for a little peace in his old age. Perhaps it was at Augher, carrying his master over the ford, that he gave a groan "Oh! oh!" and a heavy sigh as he set him down.

"By my troth!" said Patrick, "it was not usual for thee to utter that word."

"But I am an old man now, O Patrick, and infirm. And while all my comrades have churches, I am still on the road."

Then the saint grew sorry and made a plan to have Clogher a bishopric and MacCartan its first bishop. And he gave his strong man a staff and a great treasure of his, a shrine which was a box or book-cover for the Four Gospels,<sup>1</sup> called the Dommach-Airgit. And because he loved his strong man, he said:

<sup>1</sup> To be seen now in the National Museum.

## SAINT PATRICK THE TRAVELLING MAN

“Your church shall not be very far from me, so that mutual visiting between us be continued.”

There is another story of Clogher. Echu was chieftain of the sub-kingdom of Clogher and lived at the royal dún, Rathmore. He had a daughter, Cinnu, for whom he had arranged a marriage with Cormac, grandson of King Niall the Great. But Cinnu, walking with her maidens near Clogher, met St. Patrick and his company. After the bishop's sermon and her consequent baptism, the girl wished to become a nun, contrary to her father's ambition for her. It must be of this maiden whom Patrick speaks in his *Confession*:

“And especially there was one blessed lady of Scotie birth, noble rank, very beautiful, of full age, whom I myself baptized and after a few days she came for a certain purpose. She told us in confidence that she had received a secret admonition from God, and it warned her to become a Virgin of Christ. Thanks be to God, on the sixth day afterwards with best dispositions, and most eagerly she realized that divine vocation.”

There are further stories, very human in their details, of MacCartan at Clogher. When the stern saint had departed, the King, Echu, revenged his thwarted ambitions on the new bishop. Echu preferred the Druids to the saints, and liked to annoy MacCartan. He did it, a truly Irish revenge, by refusing to allow the bishop's cow to graze near the Monastery. He had her driven off and tied up. Her bellows disturbed the royal dún.

“Drive the Christians off,” said the Druids, “or the place will be theirs.”

The king sent out his son to tell them to go, but the boy went to sleep, in some barn no doubt, and the queen, pacific creature that she was, smoothed matters down and MacCartan stayed on in Clogher.

Echu, himself, though he remained a choleric, worldly old man, seems to have loved St. Patrick, and when he

## PATRICK IN DONEGAL

was dying he said to his servants: "Bury me not till Patrick comes."

Patrick, then at Saul, had foresight of the king's death, and travelled at once to Clogher. He bade the dead king arise in the name of God. Echu arose. Then Patrick asked him would he live for fifteen years more in his dún in Clogher, but Echu preferred to be instructed, baptized, and to depart to heaven. So Patrick said: "Go in peace and depart to God."

Another tradition of Clogher is that St. Brigid, a niece of Bishop MacCartan, heard St. Patrick preach there and fell asleep during his sermon—not surprising this as he preached for three days on this occasion, and she was but a little girl. It is pleasant to know that the saint forbade that she should be roughly wakened, and later listened with interest to her dream.

These two great saints of Ireland met on at least four different occasions that are recorded. And the old man asked her at one time to make his winding-sheet with her own hands. And so Brigid did.

Now we may follow Patrick through Emyvale and Glaslough, by Monaghan, to Donaghmoyne, two miles north of Carrickmacross, and on by the Lagan Bridge, and perhaps from there to Tara. The histories differ at this point. One story makes him go later to Dublin, Ford of the Hurdles, and there are traces of his coming at Finglas and in the city.

## CHAPTER XI

### PATRICK IN NORTH LEINSTER

THESE records of journeys may seem to hamper direct narrative of the saint's life. But they give a remembered glory to the roads of Ireland which are travelled by more and more in these days of omnibus, motor, train and bicycle. The place-names connect the old world with the new and make it one. No prayer was so fervent with St. Patrick as "Thy Kingdom come." Someone has said: "The strength of a character is the strength of its desires." Then Patrick was as strong as his never-resting desire to win Ireland for Christ the King.

Almost wherever we go to-day, except in the south-west, in Clare and parts of Galway, we find the way taken by the saint, slowly and laboriously, while we travel it in haste.

This time we follow him to the royal dún at Naas, going through Straffan. At Naas the fair green is the site of his tent. There is a holy well beyond the town. The fair green was an ancient place of assembly since the time of the Tuatha da Danaan.

From Naas the saint looked towards the Wicklow Hills, which ever must enchant the heart and call to it to come. Patrick, knowing that he faced death in those glens and forests and lonely passes, determined to set out at once. His way would take him by Ballymore Eustace and Hollywood (marked at this day by Druid stones), through lovely Wicklow Gap, and at last to Rathnew, where he received no welcome



## PATRICK IN NORTH LEINSTER

from the chieftain who was married to Laoghair's daughter.

Patrick and his companions were very hungry after their mountain journey, and the closed door of the royal dún was a nasty rebuff. Then Cilline, a poor man but a relation of the king, showed his hospitality. He killed a cow to feed the hungry strangers, and his wife baked bread of the meal she had for her own use. With her was her little son. Patrick, sitting watching mother and child, made this rune for them :

“ Oh, woman, cherish that little son,  
A great boar comes from a pigling,  
A flame comes from a spark,  
Thy son will be hale and strong—  
The corn is the best of plants,  
So Marcan, son of Cilline,  
Is the best of Garchu's issue.”

So it was this child became ancestor of Christian kings. Patrick shook off the dust against the rude chieftain, and went his way, probably to visit the three Palladian churches—Tigroney, Donard and Killeen Cormac. From Tigroney he must have gone by the Glen of Imaile, a beautiful region. All this country about Dunlavin and Donard is rich in Druid stones, history and tradition. It was my good fortune to visit it with Dr. Walsh, who is an authority on this district, whose children he taught for some years.

From Wicklow the saint came back to Naas. On his way he left those two old companions of his, Auxilius and Iserninus, in Killashee and Kilcullen. This was a thoughtful act. For the two were old friends and fellow-students and would be neighbourly to each other.

Soon after this we come on a case of trenching roads which recalls the “ Troublesome Times.” The saint was warned that the sons of Laigis had trenched the road and covered the trench with sods. A girl called Briga came

## SAINT PATRICK THE TRAVELLING MAN

to tell him. The boys were watching for the chariot.

"Drive on now in God's name," they shouted.

"Yes, for God's sake drive safely on," called the saint to his charioteer, and without harm they crossed the pitfall.

Presently Patrick journeyed in South Leinster to Rathvilly, travelling by that fine salmon river, the Slaney. King Crinthann gave him fine land, from the Wicklow Hills at Rathglass on the north to Mount Leinster in the south, good Carlow land. And Iserninus received for his new church the lovely spot Aghade, where, as a Bishop, he lived and died. It is curious to think of him there in that green spot by the Slaney, in the very middle of Ireland, for he had refused to go to Ireland when Germanus of Auxerre suggested it. But later he came and joined St. Patrick.

The prosperous turn of events must have been consolation to the saint who had lost his beloved nephew and fellow-worker, Sechnall of Dunshaughlin. Sechnall had early in life composed a poem about his uncle, and had accompanied him on his journeys.

Now there comes a meeting, very interesting to those who love the coast of Wexford, for it took place, according to Father Shearman, on the seashore north of Cahore, that sandy stretch which lies under the grass cliffs between Cahore and Courtown Harbour. Here, at Polshone, saint and poet met, Patrick and Dubthach, the arch-poet. Dubthach had been given this new domain by the King of South Leinster, "sea-bound, slow-waved; eastward it was by the fishful sea."<sup>1</sup> To meet the poet the saint must have come by Tinahely through the parish of Crosspatrick to Donaghmore by the sea.

Dubthach with his nephew Fiacc were the two who

<sup>1</sup> It was called Formael, a district identified by Shearman as Lunbuck, in the parish of Kilcavan, Co. Wexford.

## PATRICK IN NORTH LEINSTER

had risen to greet Patrick on his coming to Tara, disobeying the High King. But the arch-poet of Ireland was a man who might defy anybody. The position of the bards was extraordinarily high, and Dubthach was head of a large school of bards who received training for many years.

At this time his nephew Fiacc was away in Connaught with the school, collecting the dues of the bards. He was destined to succeed his uncle as Chief Poet, a glorious post for a young man. Now Patrick appears to have been diplomatic. He wanted Fiacc as a bishop for Rathvilly. He did not say so, but asked Dubthach to recommend him one of his young bards, "of good lineage, without defect, of moderate means." The old poet fell into the trap and replied: "I know no such man except it be Fiacc the Fair, of Leinster, and he has gone to Connaught."

As they were talking of him the young man appeared. He had returned unexpectedly. When his back was turned, his elders concocted a scheme which will seem to us a dubious way of forcing a vocation. Dubthach suggested that Patrick should appear to be giving him the priest's tonsure, and then Fiacc would surely volunteer to release his uncle and so take his place.

The young poet, duped in no Christian fashion we feel, saw the preparation to tonsure Dubthach, and cried out: "What is being done?" "Dubthach is about to be tonsured," they told him. Then Fiacc protested. "That is a foolish thing to do, for Erin has no poet like him, and if he becomes a bishop he gives up his profession and all his privileges."

"You will be taken in his stead," replied Patrick. At that, more Christian in his generosity than the two plotters were in their craft, the young poet answered:

"Very well! for I shall be much less loss to Ireland and to the bardic order." So, taken at his word, Fiacc

## SAINT PATRICK THE TRAVELLING MAN

was tonsured and in time became Bishop of Sletty, and an excellent one.

A relation of his, Diarmaid, great-grandson of the chief bard, founded a church "Kildiermit, on the east of Tara Hill, over Courtown Harbour."

The fame of St. Fiacc, poet and bishop, clings about Rathvilly and Sletty and Slievemargy. But the stories of his deeds and the legends are too long to relate here.

After the choice of Fiacc, it seems that St. Patrick spent some time in the north of County Wexford.

## CHAPTER XII

### PATRICK AT CASHEL

FROM Hy Cennselagh, as this district was called, the saint went on to Ossory, which extended from the Suir at Waterford to the slopes of Slieve Bloom, a length of about sixty miles, with an average breadth of sixteen miles. Probably he crossed the Barrow at Leighlin, that pleasant spot to-day; at another time he crossed this river at Athy, having come from Morett by Ballyadams. We find him near Callan founding a church, Desart, from which the Earls take their title. Probably it was at Dysart Bridge, south of Castlecomer, that his chariot-pin broke, and Patrick gave vent to those curses in which he relieved his impatience on obstacles to the Gospel. One seems to read between the lines of history that this habit was well known to his company and treated with a sort of affectionate banter. For when Patrick was about to curse people, his friends turned the curse on to insentient objects; averted from the tribe, let it rest on the thatches, on the rushes, on the River Dineen.

St. Patrick was making his way to Cashel of the Kings, going by the western border of Ossory. There are traces of him in various place-names on his route.

This coming to Cashel is a gesture wonderfully fine and picturesque. Is there anywhere in Ireland a sight quite so impressive as Cashel on its rock, rising out of the great green plain, the Golden Vein, of Tipperary? No one has seen "historic Ireland" who has not seen Cashel. Though books can tell much about it, still the reality must overpower imaginary pictures.

## SAINT PATRICK THE TRAVELLING MAN

Cashel at this time was the chief royal residence of Munster, and so it was for centuries after. Even before this greatness it was Sid-Druim, or faery hill. Cashel was capital of Munster, the place where the Munstermen paid their tribute on the Rock. After Tara and perhaps Armagh, it was the most celebrated of the provincial courts.

At this time Aengus was king, and his wife Eithne already knew the saint in her father's palace. Aengus was a just and beloved prince, with a long family to follow in his steps.

Patrick and his followers arrived in the evening and encamped below the Rock for the night. The next morning, up in his dún on the Rock, the king found terror and confusion. All the idols were overthrown, lying on their faces. What could it mean? At the same time came news of the strangers in the town. Perhaps a rumour that it was the saint reached the queen. We hear that Aengus came down from the Rock to receive the holy man and his company, and to welcome them to his fortress on the height.

Soon the king professed himself ready for baptism. The ceremony took place at the Coronation Stone of the Kings of Munster. It is surmounted now by an ancient cross. Up on that windy height, a limestone rock a hundred feet above the plain, there is a view of mountain and fertile country which is picturesquely Irish. The Galtee Mountains, the Comeraghs, Keeper Mountain, Slievenamon, keep watch about the rock across a green distance. The cloud pageant of an Irish sky is seen perfectly from this height.

Here by the stone stood saint and king, surrounded by a throng of warriors and clerics. Only at the end of the ceremony did Patrick notice blood on the ground and on the king's foot. Then he realized that his crozier had pierced the foot.

## PATRICK AT CASHEL

“Why didst thou not tell me this?” asked the saint in distress.

“It seemed to me, O Patrick, that this was a part of this holy rite.”

The tradition of St. Patrick’s sermon on the Trinity, illustrated by the shamrock, though it has given rise to the national emblem, is not found in the old books. And it is a disputed point whether it belongs to Cashel or to Tara.

In Munster, Patrick found other saints before him, Albe and Ibar, Declan and Ciaran of Saigher. And we read of Patrick and Aengus going to a banquet given by Ciaran, when eight oxen were all too little meat for the guests. We hear of him begging a ram from a boy to feast some jugglers who would not stay their hunger to wait the king’s banquet.

Then he is on a hill south of Foynes, looking across the Shannon’s mouth towards County Clare, and blessing it northward to Slieve Elne and eastwards as far as Slieve Aughty. Next he is in South Limerick near Fermoy, travelling to the country of the Deisi, a warlike tribe whose land reached to Waterford Harbour. He crossed the River Tar at Clogheen and the Suir at Ardfinnan.

At last the time came for the saint to bid farewell to the Munstermen, and he went down to ford the stream that should part him from them. It speaks of the charity he had shown and kindled that whole households followed him in a great crowd to the river-bank. When they found him “they uttered a great cry and great joyful clamour,” and from that great cheering the River Brosnacha got its name, now the Brosna; and the place of this farewell was Riverstown, less than a mile to the south of Birr.

Then the saint, an old man now, lifted up his right hand to bless Munster of these friendly souls. And he said:

## SAINT PATRICK THE TRAVELLING MAN

“ Blessing on the men of Munster,  
Men, boys and women!  
Blessing on the land  
That gives them fruit.  
Blessing on every treasure  
That shall be produced on their plains  
Without anyone being in want of help,  
God’s blessing on Munster!  
Blessing on their peaks,  
On their bare flagstones,  
Blessing on their glens,  
Blessing on their ridges.  
Like sand of sea under ships  
Be the number of their hearths:  
On slopes, on plains,  
On mountains, on peaks.”

From Munster St. Patrick went to the Kingdom of Offaly, which extended from the northern edge of Slieve Bloom eastward to the Hill of Allen in Kildare, and from Croghan Hill in the north to the Heath of Maryborough, where it joined Leix. Offaly and Leix are now county names. Except for Croghan, Offaly is a vast plain, an expanse of moorland and limestone, drained by the Barrow.

When Patrick came to Offaly, the king, Failge Berraide, declared that he would kill the saint in revenge for the destruction of the idol Crom Cruach. This story, one of the most beautiful of all the histories, is told in the “Tripartite Life.” I quote it as it stands:—

“After this Patrick went into the province of Húi Falgi, and Foilge Berraide boasted that he would kill Patrick whenever he should meet with him in vengeance for the idol Cenn-cruacch (Crom Cruach), for he was a god of Foilge’s. Now his household concealed from Patrick what Foilge had boasted. One day his charioteer Odran said to Patrick:

“ ‘ Since I am now a long time charioteering for thee,  
O master Patrick, let me to-day sit in the chief seat and



## PATRICK AT CASHEL

do thou be charioteer.' Patrick did so. Thereafter Foilge went and gave a spear thrust through Odran in the shape of Patrick.

"'My curse,' began Patrick. 'On the tree of Budarn,' interrupted Odran. 'Be it so then,' saith Patrick."

That the dying Odran diverted the curse from his murderer to the tree showed that, like St. Stephen, the Christlike spirit possessed him. But his forgiving spirit is not echoed by the writer of the narrative, for he says briefly: "Foilge died at once and went into hell."

Patrick went on to Croghan Hill, the probable place where the kings of Offaly were inaugurated. At this point the saint completed his circuit of Ireland. More than twenty-one years before he had come to the mouth of the Boyne with this work to do, and now he stood on the top of Croghan above the infant river, seeing across the great plain the distances of his "far-flung battle line." Beyond his sight the line of his travel; and now he returned a successful man. But success has often a humiliation in it to the great of soul. Patrick in his own *Confession* urges that all this was the gift of God to him, not his own success.

He may, in all likelihood, have gone to the Feis at Tara that year, A.D. 454. It would be seemly that he should attend as head of the Church in Ireland to safeguard his people and church property. The bishops would try to attend the Feis. And it is thought by Dr. Healy that at this time St. Patrick helped to reform the Brehon Laws.

This was one of the saint's greatest works, for the *Senchus Mor*, or Great Antiquity, prevailed in most parts of Ireland until A.D. 1600. It had been in force long before it was reduced to writing in the days of Cormac Mac Art.

Now there was a question of revision to bring a pagan code of law, however good, into harmony with the Gospel. A commission of nine people was appointed—

## SAINT PATRICK THE TRAVELLING MAN

Patrick, Benen and Cairnech, three bishops; Laoghaire, Corc and Daire, three kings; Rossa, Dubthach and Fergus, three poet judges. Benen (Benignus) was secretary to the commission, and Dubthach, chief poet, was bidden to show the ancient code, "all the judgments of true nature, which the Holy Ghost had spoken through the mouths of the Brehons and the just poets of the men of Erin, from the first occupation of the island down to the preaching of the faith."

Whatever clashed with the Gospel was then rejected or purified. What did not clash was confirmed by the commission, and was written in a book called the *Senchus Mor*, "and no human being of the Gael is able to abrogate anything that is in the *Senchus Mor*."

The chapter by Dr. Healy on the Brehon Laws is most interesting but too long to discuss in a little book. But some of the rules of Church discipline given in Professor Bury's book may be given here. They belong to rules laid down in a circular letter, addressed by Patrick, Auxilius and Iserninus, to all the clergy of Ireland.

A bishop was not to interfere in his neighbour's diocese. Vagabond clerks were forbidden. Churches were not to be founded without the permission of the bishop. All the clergy, from the priest to the door-keeper, were to show the complete Roman tonsure, their wives were to veil their heads. A monk and a consecrated virgin were not to drive from house to house in the same car. Christian slaves were to be redeemed if possible from slavery, but no one might privately and without permission make a collection for this purpose. Alms were not to be accepted from pagans. Only a year of penance was imposed on those who commit manslaughter or fornication or consult a soothsayer, and a half-year for an act of theft.

"A Christian who believes in a supernatural form seen in a mirror is to be anathematized."

## CHAPTER XIII

### PATRICK IN ARMAGH

WHEN St. Patrick turned northward again he went by the ancient road called Midluachair. It passed from Tara to Slane, crossed the Boyne there and went north by Collon, Ardee, Dundalk and the Moira Pass. He had various adventures on the way; espousing the cause of some cruelly treated slaves who were wood-cutting. Trian, their master, would not listen to the saint. So Patrick followed an old custom of the time; he remained outside Trian's dún refusing food or drink. So did the poet in the play *The King's Threshold*, by Mr. W. B. Yeats. But Trian was unmoved. Instead of repenting he went to beat the poor wood-cutters for their complaints. But before he reached them, his horses dashed madly into Lake Trena, dragging him and his chariot with them, and so ended Trian.

Another time he blessed an unborn child, who became Saint Domangart, from whom Slieve Donard gets its name, he being the Keeper of the Mountain, still believed to inhabit its cave.

He was in Ross, a territory extending from near Castleblaney southward to Ardee. He had passed through it ten years before on his way from Clogher to Meath, and he loved it dearly, as we do love certain places, we can hardly tell why.

He thought of settling down there as he had thought at Aghagower in Mayo. The spot he loved was Dromore. But his angel would not let him build there, says tradition.

## SAINT PATRICK THE TRAVELLING MAN

“Go to Armagh in the north,” he said. Patrick, however, determined first to found a church near Louth. At this time he made a great friendship with Mochta, a Briton like himself. Each day the two clerics used to meet at a placé called “Mochta’s Flagstone.” So happy were they that St. Patrick delayed his visit to the north. At last the angel, Victor, with celestial courtesy, laid a letter between them on the flagstone:

“Mochta, pious and faithful,  
Let him remain where he has set up,  
Patrick goes north at the King’s word,  
To rest in smooth Armagh.”

Then St. Patrick once more braced himself to travel and to cut the ties of comradeship. He begged Mochta to look after the twelve lepers he was tending at Ardpatrick, and went his way.

At first Patrick may have had no idea of making Armagh the primatial See. But we shall learn how the matter came about.

Now Emain Macha, so famous in history and in legend, was desolate. It had been the glory of Ulster, the capital for six hundred years, the palace of King Conor and the Red Branch Knights. It was the scene of that terrible, heart-moving tragedy, the death of the three sons of Usnach by the treachery of the old king because of his desire for the peerless Deirdre, the wife of Naisi, one of the three heroes. There heart-broken Deirdre had died. Then a Druid cursed Emain Macha because of the treachery that was done there, and it came to pass that none of Conor’s descendants ruled in Emania. The palace was burnt to the ground by the Three Collas who became ancestors of the tribes of modern Ulster—the MacMahons, Maguires, O’Hanlons, the MacDonalds of Antrim and the Isles, the MacDugalds, and the MacRories.

In the days of St. Patrick, King Daire lived in this





## PATRICK IN ARMAGH

neighbourhood. He may have been King of Oriel, or of one of the tribes of Oriel. Daire was friendly on the whole to the Christians and he granted Patrick a site for a Christian community not far from his own dwelling.

At the foot of the hill Ard Macha, a small tract of ground was granted to Patrick and that was the beginning of the ecclesiastical city. The monks built there a home for themselves, a kitchen and an oratory. But the saint was not content. His ambitions were always large and he pursued them with the ruthless fervour of a single-minded zealot. He wanted Ard Macha.

There were disputes between Daire and Patrick. The king let his horses graze on the saint's land and the horses died. Daire in a rage wanted Patrick killed, which was a rash order, as he nearly died himself until the queen pleaded for him and he was cured. After this passage Daire went in humble mood to present the bishop with a wonderful brazen cauldron, brought from over the sea.

"Gratzacham," said Patrick. This was "Gratias agamus," but Daire did not understand, and, going home, he thought the saint had been rude and ungrateful for the wonderful cauldron. So he told his servants to fetch it back again. They brought it home duly. "What did the Christian say?" the king asked. "Gratzacham," repeated the servants. "Gratzacham when it is given, Gratzacham when it is taken back. That must be a good word," said Daire, "bring it to him again."

He went with his gift this time and said to Patrick that he might have the cauldron and Ard Macha, the desire of the saint's heart, as well.

"After this," the "Tripartite Life" relates, "Patrick went with his elders and Daire . . . to the hill to mark it out, and to bless it and to consecrate it. They found a doe with her fawn in the place where the Barn is to-day, and his people went to kill her. And Patrick forbade them, and said that she should serve him afterwards."

## SAINT PATRICK THE TRAVELLING MAN

In the version from the *Book of Armagh*, the saint took up the fawn and carried her, the doe running behind, then he let the fawn go in the wood. Now the place where they had found her was the spot where stands the left-hand chapel of the church.

The function of measuring the land was a most solemn one; the king and his courtiers attending, the bishop, his staff of Jesus in his hand, all his clerics with him, marking out the land for his great foundation.

The same zeal must have gone to the building of the church and community houses. The establishment was self-sufficing. They produced all that they needed for domestic purposes and for the church, except the altar wine. For the rest they were their own builders, smiths, farmers, artificers, artists, brewers, gardeners, and fishermen. This fact gives a pleasant picture of homely business going on throughout the year at Armagh, with St. Patrick over it all, having a keen interest in every branch of his establishment. We know that he had always skilled men at work on bells, patens, shrine covers; and ladies who embroidered for his churches. For one of these ladies was his own sister, Lupita, who had once been sold into captivity. Tradition has two more of his sisters in the workroom. His skilled workers in gold, silver and bronze, were clergy. One was Assicus, Bishop of Elphin, another Bishop Tassach of Raholp, with him in his last hour, and the third, Bite, the nephew of Assicus. These were not at Armagh, but the same work would have been continued there.

There was besides at Armagh, under the saint's care, a seminary for clergy, for professors and students from all parts of Ireland. Here the Scriptures were studied and learnt by heart and the works of the Fathers read most carefully.

Again, there was a school of Psalm-singing or Plain-song. Benen, that beloved friend of Patrick, his true



## PATRICK IN ARMAGH

spiritual son, was choirmaster and conductor of public offices of the church.

A school of scribes would be constantly busy in such an establishment. Once Patrick had written alphabets himself for his favourite pupils, but age and overwork made him depute that office to others.

In the sixth century the school of Armagh was a noted place, thronged by scholars from Britain as from Ireland. It lasted, in spite of wars, until 1178, when John de Courci swept down upon it, plundered the shrines and removed the books and reliquaries, driving away or killing its priests and scholars.

The community showed, too, the Christian and markedly Irish virtue of hospitality. Patrick had his guest ministers to attend to him and to strangers. All these officials are named in Dr. Healy's book.

There was a woodman in charge of the wood-cutters, and a cowherd, for in the days of his travels Patrick brought his cattle with the expedition. This was obviously necessary. The cowherd may have had charge of the horses, unless the charioteer acted as groom.

The boy who had once been a herd became a shepherd of men, having care of every side of life where his flocks were concerned.

And now, after so long, the old saint, weary with travelling, had at last an abiding place. Still, it is certain that he was constantly busy. He was the organizer, the ruler, the counsellor. He had to direct his clergy, his monks and nuns, his students, his artificers; he was also a man of prayer; probably he repeated the Psalter and the Divine Canticles daily, and we know that he was deeply read in the Bible.

Wrongs of all sorts came before him, and in one case there was a wrong so great that it gave rise to the celebrated "Epistle to Coroticus," which is one of his extant writings.

## SAINT PATRICK THE TRAVELLING MAN

Patrick, so early an outdoor toiler, and so long a man of affairs, was no scholar. His Latin was poor, and he was unhappily aware of this lack of scholarship when he wrote letters. He knew that he was scorned for it by men more literate, but probably less forceful. But moved by the terrible wrongs inflicted on his people, "his children," he wrote this Epistle, full of just indignation.

Coroticus was ruler of Strathclyde in the days of St. Patrick, and, though many of his people were Christian, he had no reluctance to send a foraging expedition to the north-east of Ireland, which was full of recent converts. It seems that the raiders surprised a baptismal service, and without remorse slew many of the candidates in their white robes, the baptismal chrism barely dry on their foreheads. Others were taken captive to be at the disposal of heathen masters. "This crime so horrid and unspeakable," Patrick calls it.

He must have been near, for he sent a priest with a letter the very next day, demanding the return of captives and booty. His messenger was received with jeering and a flat refusal to make restitution. On this followed the Epistle which was to be read before Coroticus:

"With mine own hand have I written and composed these words to be given and handed to and sent to the soldiers of Coroticus.

"Where shall Coroticus with his guilty followers, rebels against Christ, where shall they see themselves—they who distributed baptized damsels as rewards, and that for the sake of a miserable temporal Kingdom?

"The Church, therefore, bewails and will lament her sons and daughters whom the sword has not as yet slain, but who are banished and carried off to distant lands where sin in the light of day weighs heavy and shamefully abounds. There freemen are put up for sale,

## PATRICK IN ARMAGH

Christians are reduced to slavery, and, worst of all, to most wicked, most vile and apostate Picts.

“I beseech earnestly that whatever servant of God be ready that he be the bearer of this letter, so that on no account it be suppressed by anyone, but much rather be read in the presence of all the people, yea, in the presence of Coroticus himself, if it so be that God may inspire them to amend their lives to God some time, so that even though late they may repent of their impious doings (murderer as he is in regard of the brethren of the Lord), and may liberate the baptized women captives whom they had taken, so that they may deserve to live to God, and be made whole, here and in eternity.”

The real, living, eager man stands out in this Epistle. As Dr. Bury points out in his *Life of the saint*, one realizes Patrick more in his own *Confession* and in this Epistle than in the later collection of marvels, that sometimes are not as creditable as the writers would have us think. Perhaps some, suggests Dr. Bury, were invented to please the popular taste of the day.

## CHAPTER XIV

### PATRICK IN SAUL

ST. PATRICK was in his beloved Saul for three or four years when he felt that death was coming. Then he wished to return to Armagh that he might die among his people there and in the place that he had chosen for his headquarters. But as he was setting out, the angel, Victor, ever his guide, appeared in a burning bush on the way and said to him:

“Return to the place from whence you have come, that is to Saul. There you shall die and enter on the way of your fathers.”

Patrick grieved, and said:

“I have chosen a place of resurrection,  
Armagh my Church:  
I have no power over my freedom,  
It is bondage to the end—

It is Armagh that I love,  
A dear thorpe, a dear hill,  
A fortress which my soul haunteth;  
Emain of the heroes will be waste.”

But the angel comforted him with thoughts of all he had been able to accomplish in Ireland, and the hopes he had for her future.

So at Saul on March 17th, his festal day for all times, he laid down a weary body in death, having first received the Eucharist from Bishop Tassach of Raholp.

As it was about his birthplace, so there are innumerable doubts about his age at death and the place of his burial. One who would write his life as a consecutive narrative,

## PATRICK IN SAUL

finds no thread to unravel, for the ball of conjecture is tangled past undoing. To say "this one says" and "that one says" diverts interest from fact and wearies it with speculation.

Professor Bury and Dr. Stokes place the death in A.D. 461 or 463, while Dr. Healy has 493. Patrick when he died may have been 72 or he may have been 120 years of age. In either case he had "fought a good fight and laid hold on eternal life." And whether his body rested in Saul or in Downpatrick is a question for scholars. The stories of his burial are legendary, but true to the spiritual facts of his sanctity and the love and honour which he had won. So did a people, who lived in an atmosphere of magic and wonder, surround their hero.

"On the first night the angels of the Lord of the elements were watching Patrick's body with spiritual songs. The odour of the divine grace which came from the holy body, and the music of the angels, brought sleep and joy to the elders of the men of Ireland who were watching the body in the nights afterwards."

The old writers certainly believed that the body of the saint was taken secretly, to avoid bloodshed between the contesting tribes who desired the honour of his burial-place. The angel had ordered that two young steers should be brought from Clogher to draw his bier and that where they stopped the burial should be.

Even with the precautions of secrecy there would have been bloodshed had not a storm on the lough separated the combatants.

"The *exact* spot where Patrick was buried," says Dr. Healy, "was kept carefully concealed; and after a time when those who had buried him had died, no one knew exactly where his bones rested."

Professor Bury holds that the saint was sepulchred at Saul when he died, rather than at Downpatrick, the

## SAINT PATRICK THE TRAVELLING MAN

supposed site of his grave, or at Armagh, as some believed.

There is this eulogy of the saint in the *Book of Lismore*, and with it this chapter shall conclude :

“ A true man, surely, was that man from purity of nature, like a patriarch. A true pilgrim like Abraham. Gentle, forgiving of heart like Moses. A praiseful psalmist like David. A student of wisdom and knowledge like Solomon. A chosen vessel for proclaiming righteousness, like Paul the Apostle. A man full of the grace and favour of the Holy Spirit like John. A fair garden with plants of virtues. A vine branch with fruitfulness. A flashing fire with the fervour of the warming and heating of the sons of Life, for kindling and illuminating charity. A lion for great strength and might. A dove for gentleness and simplicity. A serpent for cunning and prudence. A man mild, gentle, humble, tender to the sons of Life; rough, ungentle to the sons of Death. A slave in labour and service to Christ. A king in rank and might for binding and loosing, for freeing and enslaving, for quickening and killing.

“ And though great be his honour at present, greater will it be at the meeting of Doom, when the men of the world will arise at Michael the Archangel’s command. And the men of Ireland will go to meet Patrick to Down and wind along with him to Mount Zion where Christ will deal judgment to Adam’s children on that day.”

## CHAPTER XV

### PATRICK'S INFLUENCE

ST. PATRICK having died, yet lived on in his influence in his adopted country. As a Briton and a Roman citizen, one trained in the life and thought of the civilized parts of Europe, such as Auxerre, he, unconsciously perhaps, brought Ireland into a closer connection with the Continent. His influence was in this sense against insularity. It was after his time that the Irish clergy preferred certain of their own customs to those of Rome. His intention was to be in close touch with the Church of the Continent. He had brought over with him many Franks and Britons, his own relations among them. His tendency was to link Ireland up with the rest of Europe, while he identified himself with Irish national life in his regard for her rulers, his work in the revision of the Brehon Laws and his love for her people, shown in his prayer on Croaghpatrick. His work was constructive.

As for scholarship and church life, he had fostered the use of Latin, although he was a bad Latinist himself. But he had given an impetus to the written word, greater than it had as yet received from any. His influence on art had been in the direction he gave it to the service of religion. Such unique works as the *Cross of Cong*, the *Chalice of Ardagh*, and the *Book of Kells* may be traced to this inspiration, although the workmanship was typically Irish.

In converting the greater part of Ireland to Christianity St. Patrick became an instrument of that law of

## SAINT PATRICK THE TRAVELLING MAN

change which shapes history throughout the ages. He stood for the New Order as the Druids stood for the Old. In the fall of the Old Order, much that was chivalrous and magnificent in the National Ideal seemed to suffer the despoiling which comes with change. To popular imagination the heroes of the Old Order, Cuchulain and the Red Branch, Finn and his Companions, are so fine and dazzling that their treacheries and lusts are overlooked. To the eye they make a braver show than the shaven priests, the heroes of the New Order, but heroes were in no way extinct when Brian Boru was a Christian king.

Like a spring tide, the monastic period was to sweep over Europe, and Patrick prepared the way for what was coming.

An old book has it that there were three Orders of Irish saints. The First Order included Patrick and were "most holy," shining like the sun. They were founders of churches, and employed both laymen and women in the service of the houses of residence; they being founded on the Rock of Christ "feared not the blast of temptation." "These bishops," says the *Catalogue*, "were sprung from the Romans, and Franks, and Britons, and Scots."

The Second Order was of Catholic priests, of whom a few were bishops. They did not allow women to serve in the monasteries. These were "very holy" and "they shone like the moon."

The Third Order consisted of priests and a few bishops. These were "holy" and "shone like the stars." These were the hermits who lived in desert places, refused private property, and subsisted on herbs and water and the alms of the faithful.

The clergy of the First Order were parochial for the most part, though monasteries were founded and many abbots were bishops. They had to renew constantly



## PATRICK'S INFLUENCE

the struggle against the Druids, who, being so influential a class, were not easily put down.

With the rise in influence of the Second Order, the great monastic movement really started, taking inspiration from the School of Clonard.

From this time the scholastic and missionary influence of Ireland began, that is about the middle of the sixth century. Large parts of the Continent were Christianized by these Irish missionaries. So that St. Patrick, through his spiritual descendants, forwarded that Kingdom of God which was the chief desire of his soul.

## A NOTE ON THE LIVES OF ST. PATRICK

THE Lives of St. Patrick are many, both old and new.

The ancient Lives were grouped and numbered as seven by the Patrician Scholar Colgan. But before reading any biography it is best to hear Patrick, the living eager man, speak of himself and for himself as he does in his own "Confession" and in the flame-fierce "Epistle to Coroticus." In these he is the bishop and pastor of souls. In his poem "The Breastplate" or "The Deer's Cry" he is a poet. No St. Patrick's Day would be sufficient without the singing of his great hymn.

Translations of his Latin writings are easy to find. They are given in all the longer modern lives. They are rendered in blank verse by Aubry de Vere and by Sir Samuel Ferguson, and can be bought as a sixpenny pamphlet, sold by the A.P.C.K. in Dublin.

The old Lives numbered by Colgan are these:

(1) The hymns of St. Fiacc and St. Sechnall. These are eulogies. Fiacc was that young bard, the friend and pupil of Dubthach, the chief bard. He was consecrated Bishop of Sletty.

The hymn of St. Sechnall was written, as it has been told already, as a peace-offering from nephew to uncle. It was a welcome cause for that sort of spiritual bargaining which these saints of old loved. Sechnall claimed blessings and salvation for those who should repeat the hymn, or even the last lines of it—so many here, so many there, as many hairs as he had in his cowl, so many for this day, and so on. Finally St. Patrick threw in unasked benefits. The hymn repeated before dinner should ensure abundance at the meal; if said in a new house the Saints of Ireland would hold a vigil there. But these two eulogies are very short and give few facts of their subject's history.

(2) The Second Life is attributed to Patrick Junior, a nephew of the saint. This younger Patrick having been Bishop of Rosdela in Westmeath, resigned his See and went as Sacristan to his uncle at Armagh. It is said that he finally retired to Glastonbury and wrote this life.

## A NOTE ON THE LIVES OF ST. PATRICK

(3) The Third Life was taken from a Manuscript found in a Convent in Biburg, in Bavaria. It was written in Ireland by an Irishman, perhaps St. Lomman or St. Mel.

(4) The Fourth Life was found in the Monastery of St. Alna in Hannonia. It is attributed by Colgan to "St. Aileran the Wise."

(5) The Fifth Life is by Probus. This Probus was possibly a Professor in the College of Slane.

(6) The Sixth Life was written by Jocelyn of Furness. He was, it is thought, a Welshman belonging to the Monastery of Chester. In 1182 when John de Curci expelled the Secular Canons from the Cathedral of Down he brought in a colony of monks from Chester. Jocelyn was their Prior. It has been suggested too that this Jocelyn was one of the Cistercian monks brought in 1180 by John de Curci from Furness to Inch Abbey, near Downpatrick.

Jocelyn wrote this Life from the existing material. He quotes from a "Life of St. Patrick," written by his nephew Mel. This Manuscript is not in existence now. But Jocelyn's Life, written in Downpatrick at the request of the Archbishop of Armagh and of the Bishop of Down, has considerable value.

(7) The Seventh Life is the most important. It is the famous "Tripartite Life," which has been translated and edited by Dr. Whitley Stokes. Neither the name of the author or his period are known. Dr. Stokes holds that it could not have been written before the middle of the tenth century, and that it more likely was compiled in the eleventh century. The value of this "Tripartite Life" was topographical. It gives minute details of Patrick's missionary journeys.

Besides these Lives there is the *Book of Armagh*. It was written in A.D. 808. The Scribe's name was Ferdomnach. The first document in this book is a Memoir of the saint by Muirchu Machteni. The second document contains annotations by Tírechán. He gives many notes on the associates of St. Patrick and their Missionary labours.

Then follows *The Book of the Angel*, an account of a revelation made to Patrick by an angel.

The last part of the *Book of Armagh* contains the "Confession." The copyist concludes: "Thus far the volume which Patrick wrote with his own hand," showing that he copied the saint's own handwriting.

In trying to make a story of the wanderings of St. Patrick the Travelling Man of God, I have used the following books:

## SAINT PATRICK THE TRAVELLING MAN

*Life and Writings of St. Patrick*, by The Most Rev. Dr. HEALY, Archbishop of Tuam.

*Life of St. Patrick*, by Professor J. B. BURY, Litt.D.

*Tripartite Life of Patrick*, edited by WHITLEY STOKES, D.C.L., LL.D.

*Book of Armagh*, edited with Introduction and Appendices by JOHN GWYNN, D.D., D.C.L.

*The Remains of St. Patrick*, by Sir SAMUEL FERGUSON, LL.D.

*Saint Patrick*, by the Abbé RIGUÉT.

*The Irish Liber Hymnorum*, edited by BERNARD and ATKINSON.

*A History of Ireland*, by ELEANOR HULL, L.H.D.

*Celtic Ireland*, by Professor EOIN MACNEILL, L.H.D.

*Literary History of Ireland*, by Dr. DOUGLAS HYDE.

*A Social History of Ancient Ireland*, by P. W. JOYCE, M.A.

*Irish Heroes*, by I. MACRAITH.

"Native Place of St. Patrick," by Professor EOIN MACNEILL in *Proceedings of Royal Irish Academy*.

"Earliest Lives of St. Patrick," by Professor EOIN MACNEILL in *Journal of the Royal Irish Academy*.

"Silva Focuti," by Professor EOIN MACNEILL in *Proceedings of the Royal Irish Academy*.

And I would like to name here with gratitude those who have helped me by the loan of books: Mrs. HUTTON and Major H. MCCLINTOCK; and by reading the manuscript and criticism, Dr. PATRICK WALSH, M.A., Ph.D. And for guidance to the scene of St. Patrick's landing in A.D. 432, and to the places connected with his early and later days I thank Mrs. CHAMBRÉ and the Very Rev. Dean CARMODY of Down.

Also, I wish to acknowledge my debt for the use of the map of St. Patrick's Missionary Journeys, taken from Dr. HEALY's great *Life of St. Patrick*. For this I have to thank the late Archbishop's niece and executrix, Miss ELLEN CLEARY (Sr. Evangelist of the Presentation Convent, Tuam) and the Publishers of the book, Messrs. GILL LTD. and Messrs. THOM LTD.

# Date Due

NOV 3 72		NOV 6 1970
APR 14 '81		13424034
MAY 22 1997		

BX  
4700  
P3L4

17

AUTHOR

Letts.

TITLE

Saint Patrick, the travelling man

DATE DUE

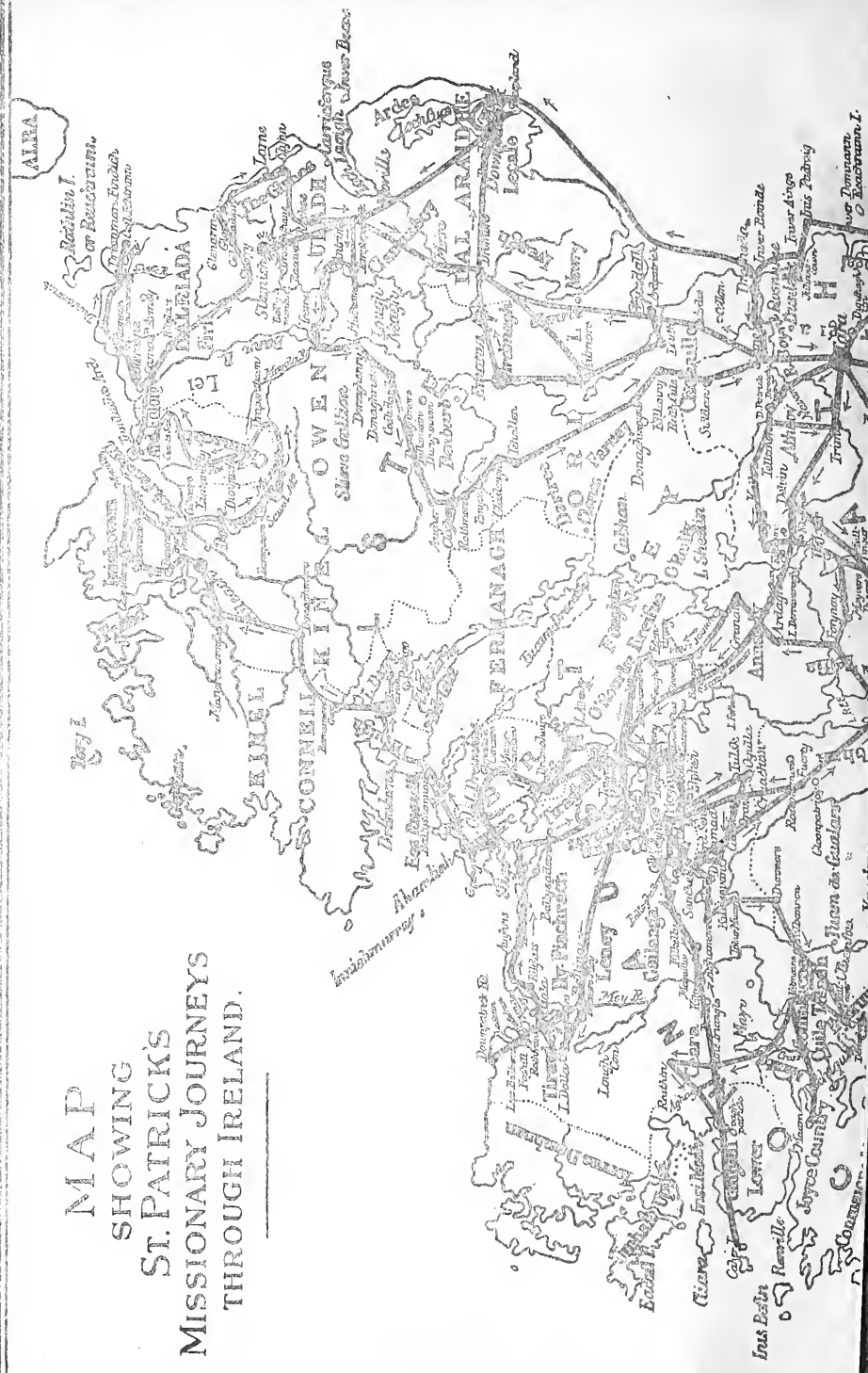
BORROWER'S NAME

11 03 2

1997 0 73

BX  
4700  
P3L4

# MAP SHOWING ST. PATRICK'S MISSIONARY JOURNEYS THROUGH IRELAND.



BX4700.P3 L4

CLAPP



3 0002 00094 9599

Letts, Winifred M.  
Saint Patrick, the travelling man; the s

HELEN DAVIES MCGLADE  
128 CHESTNUT STREET  
BOSTON MASSACHUSETTS

Books



